

Ekeus in Iraq for talks to end embargo

BAGHDAD (R) — A senior United Nations envoy arrived in Baghdad Friday for disarmament talks which if successful could lead to lifting the oil embargo on Iraq. Rolf Ekeus, chairman of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) disarming Iraq under 1991 Gulf war ceasefire terms, said lifting of sanctions depended on the success of his talks with Iraqi officials. "We'll talk now. We don't know what will be the outcome of the talks," Mr. Ekeus told reporters when asked about a possible lifting of sanctions. He said a decision to ease or remove the more than three-year-old regime of sanctions on Baghdad was not easy. "It is quite a complex issue. I would wait a little to comment on that. I do not want to be specific," he said. Mr. Ekeus said earlier in Manama, the regional base for U.N. inspectors, that sanctions could be lifted in six months if Baghdad fully complied with demands. Asked by a reporter there when sanctions would be lifted, he replied: "I said that in my report to the Security Council on Sept. 10. Six months might be a realistic assessment of the time." If Iraq is honest it will be possible. I think it will."



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Donors pledge nearly \$2b for Palestinian self-rule

Combined agency dispatches
WASHINGTON — Urged by the United States to "seize the moment," delegates from 43 countries pledged nearly \$2 billion Friday to bankroll Palestinians as they prepare to take over administrative charge of the occupied Gaza Strip and part of the occupied West Bank from Israel.

At the close of a conference of donor nations, U.S. treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen said he was confident the total ultimately would exceed the \$2.4 billion the World Bank has agreed is needed to develop the West Bank and Gaza Strip over the next five years.

"We all realize that the people on the ground have to see the results of this agreement," said Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

He called the meeting a "striking success" and said the turnout reflected "the new political landscape and the new sense of optimism that has emerged in the Middle East."

The World Bank and a Palestinian steering committee will play roles in managing dispersal of the assistance, while the United Nations will take charge of immediate relief needs. Organisers of the conference were hard-pressed, however, to describe the operation in any detail.

Mr. Christopher told donors the agreement on Palestinian self-rule signed last month at the White House "challenges all of us to seize the moment."

He brushed aside, meanwhile, questions about the Arabs' refusal to end their economic boycott of Israel. "We have enough to do to carry out this major task," he said.

A senior U.S. official told reporters Thursday in New York, after Mr. Christopher had met with a dozen Arab leaders, that not one Arab state had agreed to abandon the boycott.

Mr. Bentsen said the 43 countries and 47 delegations attending the five-hour conference had pledged more than \$600 million for the first year while commitments approaching \$2 billion had been received for five years.

Among the pledges was \$100 million from Saudi Arabia.

"People on the ground have to see the results of this agreement," Mr. Christopher told a press conference after the aid meeting.

"We are prepared to do our part," Mr. Gore said in opening the conference. "... The United States anticipates contributing \$500 million over the next five years to help meet the economic needs associated with implementing the Israeli-Palestinian agreement."

Israel, which less than two weeks ago recognised the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), pledged \$25 million in grants and \$50 million in credits.

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Prince Hassan meets Peres; tripartite group announced Crown Prince reaffirms vision of peace

Combined agency dispatches

WASHINGTON — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Friday met at the White House with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in a meeting hosted by U.S. President Bill Clinton in what was seen as another major diplomatic breakthrough after the signing of the groundbreaking Israeli-Palestinian autonomy agreement last month.

They announced after the meeting the creation of a Jordania-American-Israeli working group to advance regional economic development. In a brief statement to the press, Mr. Clinton thanked both Prince Hassan and Mr. Peres for accepting his invitation to the meeting and underlined "the importance of the U.S. attaches to Jordan's critical role in achieving a lasting peace."

Crown Prince Hassan, who shook hands with Mr. Peres, told reporters: "There is much to be done. We have to commit ourselves to a work ethic for peace."

—Reporting the White House.

meeting, a press release from the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said: "His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan met today with President Clinton at the invitation of the president, where he delivered a message from His Majesty King Hussein."

"It is a very moving occasion for our people, and I hope for the rest of the Middle East."

A White House spokesman said the meeting underlined the administration's efforts to build upon the agreement last month between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) on five years of interim autonomy in the Israeli-occupied territories pending final status negotiations in the third year.

On Sept. 14, one day after the PLO and Israel signed the accord, Jordan and Israel signed an agenda outlining the principles for a peace agreement.

The economic working group announced Friday is expected to serve as a vehicle for Jordan to involve itself in the Palestinian economy envisaged in the occupied territories under the accord and contribute to regional economic development.

—Reporting the White House.

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His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan speaks to the press at the White House Friday as U.S. President Bill Clinton (centre) and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres look on (AFP photo)

'Jordan needs support to shoulder its responsibilities for better region'

Following is the full text of an address made by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan at Friday's meeting in Washington of donors on support to Middle East peace:

Mr. Chairman, in two hours, the conference to support Middle East peace will be over, and we will walk away from this room. Those whose lives will evermore be changed by our decisions cannot walk away. On the streets of Amman and Tel Aviv, in

peace can be enjoyed by the peoples of the Middle East, and timely in view of the gathering momentum towards a just and comprehensive settlement.

Jordan supports the PLO-Israel accord as a significant step on the road to regional reconciliation. Indeed, we had already agreed an agenda

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Assad, Hrawi meet

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syrian President Hafez Al Assad met here Friday with his Lebanese counterpart Elias Hrawi to discuss the Middle East peace process, presidential spokesman Jibril Kuriyeh said. The spokesman said Mr. Assad and Mr. Hrawi had talked about "the Middle East peace process and questions arising from it." Mr. Hrawi, who arrived in the Syrian capital early Friday, bid a one-on-one discussion with Mr. Assad before they were joined by Syrian Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam, Prime Minister Mahmoud Al Zoubi and Chief of Staff Hikmat Shenabi, Mr. Kuriyeh said.

4 Israelis wounded as mine explodes

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Four Israeli civilians were wounded Friday, one of them seriously, when they detonated a recently planted landmine as they walked in a field in south Jerusalem, police said. The most seriously injured victim lost a leg after treading on the mine, a device more than 25 years old which was recently dug up by unknown attackers from a sealed-off minefield and re-planted, police said. The three other casualties, all from the same family, received shrapnel wounds, police said.

Police recruits head for Egypt

GAZA CITY, occupied Gaza Strip (AFP) — A new group of 52 recruits, most of them lawyers, left here Friday for Egypt to train as Palestinian police officers, the head of the future force in Gaza said. In addition to 43 lawyers the recruits also comprise four engineers and three doctors. After a three-month course they were expected to become police lieutenants, Ibrahim Muhamma said. Egypt and Jordan are training Palestinians for a police force will be deployed in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho, after they receive autonomy on Oct. 13. A first batch of 25 recruits left Gaza for Egypt on Sept. 15 while another group went for Jordan from Jericho. Mr. Muhamma said that two-year training programmes for officers will soon be set up while courses for women only would start next week.

30,000 feared dead in Indian quake

Combined agency dispatches

towns of Khilari and Umarga, and several neighbouring villages.

KHILLARI — Heavy rains on Friday hampered rescue efforts under way in quake-ravaged western India as thousands of victims of the stunning calamity were cremated in mass funerals here.

Thunderstorms lashed the region, drenching villages and towns flattened by Thursday's pre-dawn temblor, which an opposition leader said could have killed as many as 30,000 people in the state of Maharashtra.

It was the worst quake to hit the subcontinent in nearly 60 years.

Hundreds of villagers spent the second consecutive night in the open, huddled in makeshift camps and buildings still left standing. Many huddled under trees or in the open, looking numb.

Authorities organised mass cremations, frantically disposing of bodies extricated from tonnes of debris in the small

Bombay, the Maharashtra capital some 400 kilometres west of here, claimed that toll was barely 10,000, but admitted that it could be more.

"God alone knows how many died," one police officer said.

The Indian army took over relief operations Friday in the quake-hit region as hospitals here fought to cope with the sheer number of the injured.

The army set up barricades around villages and towns flattened by the temblor as soldiers began digging out bodies and ferried the injured to military clinics, witnesses said.

"We have sent in two brigades (5,000 men) and we are rushing in more troops," an army spokesman said as helicopters airlifted three tonnes of medicines and brought to three hospitals on wheels to the ravaged districts.

Heavy earth-moving excavators and bulldozers began sifting through the rubble Friday

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Christopher planning Mideast mission, Syrian papers report

Combined agency dispatches

DAMASCUS — U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher will soon tour the Middle East to push forward the peace process, the Syrian official press reported Friday.

The American administration will dispatch Secretary of State Warren Christopher to the Middle East to secure the important peace breakthrough, Al Baath, organ of the ruling Baath Party, said in a front-page story.

"The administration of President Bill Clinton is thus demonstrating it is convinced that the region needs a just and comprehensive peace, not separate agreements," it said.

Another daily, Al Thawra, said Mr. Christopher was preparing for a new tour to advance the Middle East peace process.

The papers also quoted Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al Sharara as saying, "we cannot say that peace has been established before the end of the Israeli occupation of all the occupied Arab territories."

Syria has criticised the Palestine Liberation Organisation in the interview published on

Friday that Israel should not insist too hard on what peaceful relations would mean in practice — its key demand from Syria in return for withdrawal.

The president has been trying to keep Syrian-Israeli peace talks moving despite Israel's wish for a pause after signing the autonomy agreement with the Palestinians. He has met both Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Syria President Hafez Al Assad since the signing.

Mr. Mubarak said he told Mr. Rabin that the Israeli-Palestinian accord made agreement with Syria more urgent. He added that what he heard from Mr. Assad "strengthened my belief that an agreement can be reached in a reasonable, not long, period of time."

But he said: "This does not mean that an agreement between Syria and Israel is imminent or can be reached within weeks, or that I obtained any definite undertaking or commitment from either side in this regard."

He added: "What I want to

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Extent of liberalisation in focus after debate on pros and cons of poll delay

By Katherine Rath

AMMAN — Six weeks before parliamentary elections are set to take place, Jordan has experienced what amounted to be a major political battle between opponents and proponents of holding the elections as scheduled — a battle which, in the end, resulted in a victory for the supporters of "elections on time" option.

The PLO-Israel agreement, which, when it was first announced, came as a shock to Jordan, threatened to change radically the political situation in the country as the leadership was reconsidering its policy options both internally and on the regional level.

But the recent developments have turned the spotlight mainly on Jordan's process of democratisation and has raised important questions on how far Jordan's political liberalisation can go, or allow itself to be retarded, in light of the new situation.

His Majesty King Hussein has pledged that under no circumstances would be allow the march towards democracy to be reversed. At a meet-

Mr. Kabariti said "we can easily find examples where the King acted more democratically than Parliament. But this should not be mistaken for a preference on my part to have no Parliament. Not at all, I am only putting things into their proper perspective."

At the centre of the debate that followed the Sept. 13 agreement was the issue of Jordanians of Palestinian origin, who constitute half of the population, and their future role in the political life of the country, as well as the relationship between Jordan and a future Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza.

A major argument for delaying the parliamentary vote was that holding the elections at this crucial moment would seriously endanger Jordanian national unity. It was feared that the PLO-Israel accord would be made the main issue in the election campaign and that this would lead to a disruption of the solidarity

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Abdul Karim Kabariti, along with prominent journalists and writers last month, he said that "protecting democracy is a commitment and a duty and a march on a direction from which there is no going back."

But while some analysts and observers argued that a postponement of elections would have been equivalent to a setback for democracy in Jordan, others contended that it would not have affected the process in a negative way.

Former cabinet minister and deputy from Aqaba Abdul Karim Kabariti did

The writer has done research work on democratisation in Jordan. She contributed this analysis to the Jordan Times.

Talks fail to end Russian crisis

Combined agency dispatches

MOSCOW — Talks between the Kremlin and rebel lawmakers failed to produce a breakthrough Friday towards ending Russia's political crisis as President Boris Yeltsin demanded parliament disarm prior to any compromise deal.

I have the feeling that they don't need this negotiation process," Mr. Yeltsin's chief of staff, Sergei Filatov, said at a news conference following a day of talks with representatives from the rebel parliament.

His remarks came after both sides in the crisis, after timid moves towards compromise, appeared to retreat to earlier hardline positions, notably on the issue of weaponry possessed by the defenders of the parliament.

"All negotiations — all — must begin with the handing over of arms," Mr. Yeltsin said in an interview broadcast on Commonwealth States television news.

"Weapons are so dangerous, you understand, that any shot, however inadvertent, would be

a provocation which could lead to blood (being spilled)," Mr. Yeltsin said in the television interview. "This is unacceptable."

"Any talks can be opened only upon the surrender of weapons," Mr. Yeltsin said.

He said the deputies had failed to honour their side of an agreement under which they were to yield their weapons in exchange for electricity and other services being restored to the encircled parliament, which Mr. Yeltsin dissolved last week.

"I had hoped that last night common sense would prevail, that the negotiations would produce results," he said.

The agreement was as follows: The mayor's office turns on the lights and they surrender their arms. The lights were turned on and they refused to give up the weapons. It is difficult (now) even to deal with them," he said.

Russia's supreme legislature rejected the overnight deal after its leaders denounced it.

Why Baghdad opposes the Israel-PLO autonomy agreement but will not fight it

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Iraq, a vocal opponent of the Israeli-Palestinian autonomy accord, will not engage in any action that would undermine the ground-breaking accord or the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), Iraqi and Palestinian diplomats say.

An Iraqi promise to this effect, confirmed by independent Arab political sources, has been made despite Iraqi state-run media attacks on the agreement. It marks a shift in the Iraqi stand, and appears to have been prompted by two key considerations:

— A realisation that continued opposition to the accord would only further infuriate the U.S. and diminish chances of an early lifting of the international sanctions imposed following the August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

— Worry that Syria, a long-time ideological and political rival to Iraq, could gain from Baghdad's rejection of the accord.

The Iraqis believe that if they contribute to weakening the PLO leadership under Yasser Arafat then the only beneficiaries would be dissident Palestinian factions based in Damascus and through them the regime of Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad.

The Iraqi position was conveyed by Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz to Farouk Kaddoumi, head of the PLO's Political Department and de facto Palestinian "foreign minister" who visited Baghdad Sept. 14 and 15, said the diplomat who spoke to the Jordan Times on condition that they would not be identified.

Mr. Aziz, a close confidant of President Saddam Hussein, also promised that Iraq would not withdraw its protege, the Arab Liberation Front (ALF), from the decision-making Executive Committee of the PLO, they said. In fact, it was a reaffirmation of an announcement by the ALF that its representative in the PLO Executive Committee, Mahmoud Ismail who voted against the agreement in the committee, would not resign from the panel, as at least five others did in protest against the accord.

"But the Iraqi pledge to the PLO does not mean that (Baghdad) has abandoned its opposition to the Israel-PLO agreement," said an Iraqi diplomat. "We continue to reject it since we believe that the accord falls short of Palestinian aspirations to statehood."

Iraq cast the lone vote against Arab endorsement of the agreement, signed in Washington on Sept. 13, at a meeting of the Cairo-based, 21-member Arab League Foreign Ministers' Council. It was surprising when seen against the backdrop of "yes" votes from Syria and Libya, two other Arab countries which have criticised the accord.

"The vote was not different from the record of Iraq in the Arab League Council," said the diplomat. "It had always opposed all resolutions and decisions which it found as undermining or sacrificing Arab rights."

"Iraq adopted the same policy towards the Camp



Tareq Aziz

Farouk Kaddoumi

David agreements (between Egypt and Israel) and all other proposals which it felt did not fully meet with the minimum requirements of peace — the total and complete rights of the Palestinian people," he added.

The Iraqi media have kept up a torrent of attack against the agreement. Al Thawra, the organ of the ruling Baath Socialist Party, called for a change in the PLO leadership under Chairman Yasser Arafat, in an ironic twist for the man who burnt his bridges with his bankrollers Saudi Arabia and Kuwait by supporting Iraq in the Gulf crisis of 1990-91.

A senior PLO source confirmed the Iraqi diplomat's account and added that Mr. Aziz also agreed to PLO request to facilitate the transfer of Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers based in Iraq to Jordan for training as a Palestinian police force to be deployed in the occupied territories as part of the Israel-PLO accord.

The Israel-PLO agreement envisages an interim five-year period of Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The occupying power will withdraw its forces from the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho in four months and allow the Palestinians to administer the territories with autonomous powers.

The rest of the West Bank will remain under Israeli control but with a smaller measure of Palestinian self-rule. The final status of the territories will be determined in negotiations starting not later than the third year of autonomy.

Mr. Kaddoumi was among a handful of PLO Executive Committee members who opposed the agreement saying it did not address the Palestinian quest for statehood, the plight of the 3.5 million Palestinian refugees and the status of Jerusalem, which Israel claims as its "undivided and eternal capital."

The veteran PLO official refused to sign the accord on behalf of the PLO. He was on his way to Baghdad when the document was being signed at the White House.

Mahmoud Abbas, another PLO executive and architect of the accord, and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres signed the agreement.

The first words of Mr. Aziz when he met Mr. Kaddoumi was to the effect that Baghdad was unable to extend the kind of assistance that he was looking for, said the PLO source.

"Abu Lutuf (Kaddoumi's nom de guerre) had to explain that despite his reservations over the agreement he had not abandoned his commitment to the PLO, and remained a soldier in the

Palestinian struggle," said the source. "Everyone in the PLO has a role to play," the source quoted Mr. Kaddoumi as telling Mr. Aziz.

Jordanian sources said Mr. Kaddoumi repeated the same words during a meeting with the Kingdom's prime minister, Abdul Salam Al Majali, upon his return to Amman after visiting Baghdad.

The comment boosts a belief in Palestinian political circles here that Mr. Kaddoumi's opposition to the accord was an orchestrated scenario agreed with Mr. Arafat. The scenario, according to those who propagate it, is that the PLO chairman wanted people whom he could trust waiting in the wings to any surge of hardliners who oppose him towards assuming control of the PLO if indeed something went wrong in the agreement with Israel.

According to the sources, Mr. Aziz told Mr. Kaddoumi that "the PLO had better not forget that if it was not for Iraq there would not have been any peace process in the region, and the Palestinians are now reaping the fruits of Iraq's sacrifices."

It was a direct reference to what Baghdad believed as the pressure it brought to bear upon the U.S. during the Gulf crisis by linking any solution to Iraq's occupation of Kuwait to an end to Israel's control of Arab territories seized in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

Washington rejected that argument and went ahead with expelling Iraq from Kuwait by force. But the entire crisis brought new focus to the decades-old Palestinian problem, as evidenced by Washington's leading role in launching the Middle East peace process with an international conference in Madrid, Spain, in October 1991, seven months after the war over Kuwait.

Independent Arab political sources believe that Iraq can ill-afford to run a campaign against the Israel-PLO accord since such a posture would further weaken chances of Washington relenting on its campaign to lift or ease the international sanctions. The political priority of Iraq, the sources say, is to address its mounting economic problems through a relaxation if not outright lifting of the sanctions (Dennis Ross, the Clinton administration's coordinator for the Middle East, said recently that while Washington would welcome an Iranian change of mind and involvement in the peace process, it found no room for Iraq as long as Saddam Hussein remained in power in Baghdad).

Baghdad can still use the ALF card against Mr. Arafat if it chooses to, the analysts

Iraqi backing for peace process quid pro quo for end to sanctions

Following is a column that economist Dr. Fahd Al Fanek wrote in the Al Rai Arabic Language daily on Sept. 25, 1993.

IT IS TRUE that Iraq is currently isolated from the international arena and from the regimes of the Arab World. But most certainly it is not in isolation from the Arab masses. Iraq will continue to constitute an influencing Arab weight that can by no means be ignored or overlooked.

Iraq's position vis-a-vis Middle East peace is of paramount importance in the eyes of the man in the street of the Arab World because Iraq is the only Arab country which is totally free of American political influences.

As expected, Iraq has rejected the Arab League decision and did not bless the planned agreements with Israel concluded under U.S. sponsorship. Iraq has not approved of any move or any form of cooperation with any party as long as it remains under embargo on all fronts an embargo which is being implemented under U.S. influence and under the pretext of implementing unjust United Nations resolutions which are only applicable against Arab countries.

It should be clear that ruling out Iraq's role in the Middle East power balance or political influence, forcing the country to oppose peace agreements, is something that by no means can serve the Arab or Palestinian causes or the cause of peace in general. Such a situation bound to cause an embarrassment to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), Syria and Jordan which are involved in the peace process.

Attracting Iraq to the peace process and involving Baghdad in pan-Arab decisions offer the best guarantee for the peace process. Also it should be noted that an all-out Arab support for the peace process is vital to back Jordan, Syria and the PLO which are taking a big risk in the course of their drive to establish a comprehensive peace.

In my belief, Iraq would adopt a very positive and understanding position towards the peace process in view of the current world circumstances, provided the Arab governments take a positive stand of Iraq's circumstances and provided that Arab states end the Barbaric economic embargo being imposed on the Iraqi people and exercise pressure on the United States, which has an interest to have a comprehensive peace established in the whole region including Iraq. It is totally unacceptable to see Arab countries making peace with Israel before opening the door for reconciliation and cooperation with Iraq.

The PLO realises too well that Iraq remains its main backer in the Arab World and it is not in its interest to lose such support. Jordan realises that all the gains it would achieve as a result of the peace settlement with Israel would not outweigh its economic and political losses with Iraq, which is Jordan's strategic depth and a country on which Jordan pins so many future hopes. Furthermore, the Syrian ruling Baath Party would not be at ease if it took one step which the ruling Baath Party in Iraq might consider as a deviation from the national principles stand.

The United States which is obviously pulling all the strings as much as Iraq is now in need for a termination of the economic embargo. Otherwise, no one can guess who would be besieging whom, should a cold-war of political and media propaganda start later on.

noted: The front, set up in the late 1960s, is actually an organ of the Baath Party. While an ALF departure from the PLO Executive Committee is not expected to have any major repercussions, it would add to the image of a deeply divided PLO, given the resignation of five other executives — independents Mahmoud Darwish and Shahif Al Hout, Abu Ali Mustafa of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Tayseer Khaled of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and Abdallah Hourani (who is also believed to be pro-Iraq).

Baghdad also boasts the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF), headed by Mohammad Abbas who rose to fame as the mastermind of the 1985 hijack of the Italian cruiser Achille Lauro off the Egyptian coast. Mr. Abbas, better known as Abu Abbas, lives in Baghdad, but he has support from other Arab countries for over two decades.

PLF insiders say the Iraqi rejection of the landmark agreement was not exactly a surprise for Mr. Arafat, but the vehemence of the Baghdad media attacks jolted the PLO chairman, who supported Saddam during the Gulf crisis and was ostracised by the oil-rich Gulf Arab states, which cut off financial aid in retaliation.

Iraq and Syria are ruled by rival wings of the mother Baath party set up in the 1960s and have been engaged in a bitter rivalry for domination of the Arab scene for over two decades.

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The resulting financial strain in the PLO was one of the key elements that prompted Mr. Arafat to settle for autonomy rather than immediate statehood, PLO sources say.

U.S. calls on all Arab parties to make peace with Israel

NEW YORK (USIA) — Secretary of State Warren Christopher has urged Syria, Lebanon and Jordan to follow the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and negotiate peace agreements with Israel.

Earlier this month in Washington, Israel and the PLO signed a historic declaration of principles that opens the way for Palestinian "empowerment" in Gaza and the West Bank towns of Jericho.

Mr. Christopher met Wednesday in New York with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, a co-signer of that accord. They discussed the follow-up to the agreement, which anything, a donors conference in Washington to support Middle East peace Friday.

While the agreement marks a breakthrough, equally important "almost more important," Mr. Christopher said, is the follow-up in the other three tracks of the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations — with Syria, Lebanon and Jordan — as well as "the follow-up with the other countries in the region to encourage them to have comparable steps forward in their relationships with Israel."

Mr. Christopher also met separately with Prince Saudi Al Faisal, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, as he continued a round of bilateral talks on the fringes of the United Nations General Assembly.

The United States stands ready "to serve the parties and will be responsive whenever they are ready to ask us to facilitate the negotiations," Mr. Christopher told reporters at a press opportunity with Mr. Peres.

"I think we have a period of time while we're adjusting to this new reality," the secretary said. "I'll be ready to go back to the region and serve the parties whenever they are ready to have me do so."

For the time being, he said, "we are encouraging the Syrians

to recognise that the United States is still committed to playing a very strong role."

Mr. Christopher will meet with Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharra in Washington next week and said he would "encourage him to continue this process."

The secretary said he hoped at least some of the Arab states would renounce the Arab boycott of Israel at the donors conference.

"It's a time of real volatility and opportunity in the region," Mr. Christopher said. "The United States role here is to press the parties as hard as we can to move to recognise the new reality and take advantage of it while things are so dynamic."

Without predicting anything, he said, "I hope for some good, at least mild, surprises over the next couple of weeks." He did not elaborate, nor would a senior U.S. official who later spoke to reporters at a background briefing.

Mr. Peres also noted that "without an American role and without the secretary of state, the peace process would never be reborn."

Asked if he planned to meet with the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, and perhaps Syria, at the Washington conference, Mr. Peres said he had no "inhibitions" about doing so. "I am ready," he said, adding he would "strongly recommend" that the Arabs "come in the open and negotiate peace as it should be negotiated in an age when everything is open and everybody is expecting to have peace as a new reality."

At the background briefing, the senior U.S. official told reporters that Mr. Christopher and Mr. Peres discussed future steps in the Arab-Israeli peace process, focusing on the economic implications of the Israeli-PLO agreement and how to implement the declaration of principles.

They also discussed the need

to "undo" some of the past anti-Israeli U.N. resolutions and declarations which have become "anachronistic" in the light of the breakthrough in the peace process, he said, pointing out that Israel is making progress towards normalising its status in the U.N. system.

On the peace process, the official said, "both sides agreed we have two tasks here. One is the task of putting teeth into the declaration of principles by assuring that it will be carried out on the ground."

Allocation of the necessary resources is "absolutely necessary to start changing the lives of the Palestinians," he said. The second task is to move ahead on the other tracks of the peace process, "especially the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese fronts," he said.

In his talks with the Saudi foreign minister, Mr. Christopher expressed U.S. appreciation for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) statement that supported the breakthrough on the Israeli-Palestinian front, the official said.

Prince Saud said Saudi Arabia "always recognised that the Palestinian issue is the political focal point of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and that this is a major move forward," the U.S. official told reporters.

He said the United States agrees with that viewpoint and "it is our analysis that the very political core of the Arab-Israeli conflict has been the Palestinian issue. The other core — the geopolitical core — is the Israeli-Syrian dimension, which is basically the strategic dimension."

The conference will establish the coordinating mechanisms and the specific mechanisms for channelling aid to Gaza and Jericho, the official explained. "There will be very strict management controls and mechanisms set up, both at the giving end and hopefully at the receiving end on how to use this."

No peace without Syria and Lebanon — Hariri

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri said Thursday there would be no durable peace in the Middle East without the involvement of his own country and Syria.

Arab analysts say that the Iraqi leadership believes that if the ALF and PLF were to quit the PLO then Iraq would be deprived of its indirect influence in the PLO decision-making scene and the hands of Syrian-based dissident groups such as the PFLP and DFLP will be strengthened and, through them, Syria itself.

Iraq and Syria are ruled by rival wings of the mother Baath party set up in the 1960s and have been engaged in a bitter rivalry for domination of the Arab scene for over two decades.

PLO insiders say the Iraqi rejection of the landmark agreement was not exactly a surprise for Mr. Arafat, but the vehemence of the Baghdad media attacks jolted the PLO chairman, who supported Saddam during the Gulf crisis and was ostracised by the oil-rich Gulf Arab states, which cut off financial aid in retaliation.

In this context, I should like to emphasise, with the benefit of lessons drawn from our common experience, that there will be no firm or durable peace in the Middle East without the involvement of its own country and Syria.

The accord reached between Israel and the Palestinians will remain an isolated step unless it is complemented by quick and substantive solutions on the other tracks," he said in a speech to the General Assembly.

He also demanded the total withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Lebanese territory, in accordance with Security Council Resolution 425, passed in 1978, as critical. It calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the "security zone."

Israel and its allies of the South Lebanon Army militia control a 15-kilometre-deep so-called "security zone" along the Lebanese side of the border.

More than 30,000 Syrian troops are stationed in other parts of the country.

Mr. Hariri also called for the release of more than 200 Lebanese who he said were being held by Israel in the Al Khiyam detention camp in southern Lebanon and of another 1,000 detained in prisons inside Israel.

Lebanon is willing to cooperate fully with the United States and Russia, the co-sponsors of the Middle East talks, "particularly the United States of America, to reach a comprehensive and just solution that would safeguard the rights of all parties to permanent peace, and put an end,

Rafik Hariri

once and for all, to conflicts in the region," Mr. Hariri said.

Between 1968 and 1993 more than 80 U.N. resolutions and statements on Lebanon were issued, but Mr. Hariri singled out Security Council Resolution 425, passed in 1978, as critical. It calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the "security zone."

The only way to insure regional security is by ending the occupation of Lebanon territory," the prime minister said.

He said that "the Lebanese have always been deeply bitter over the fact that political interests have prevailed over justice and the rule of law, resulting in the application of double standards," in implementing U.N. resolutions.

MARKET PRICES



Her Majesty Queen Noor, accompanied by Their Highnesses Prince Ra'd and Princess Maja and about 700 marchers, Thursday take to the streets of Amman to raise funds for the Centre for the Rehabilitation and Training of the Blind (Petra photo)

Queen leads Charity march

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor, accompanied by Their Highnesses Prince Ra'd and Princess Maja Thursday started the charity march "Al Noor Wal Amal" (the light and the hope) for the benefit of the blind.

The march, which was organised by the Centre for the Rehabilitation and Training of the Blind, took off from the Orthodox Club in Abdoun and ended at the Amman Marriott Hotel.

All proceeds from the march will go to the development of the centre, which is the regional office of The Middle East Committee for the Blind in Jordan.

Established in 1974, the centre is committed to raising public awareness, as well as to catering to the needs of blind women in Jordan and in the region. It currently accommodates 40 women and provides occupational, technical and educational training and assistance.

The centres ultimate goal is to facilitate the integration of these blind women into society.

One of the centres primary objectives is to eradicate illiteracy among the blind, especially by teaching them to use Braille, among other advanced methods. It also offers financial and medical assistance, as well as job placement to its students. To encourage blind women from all over the country to benefit from its services, the centre provides accommodation in a hostel.

Queen Noor presented cups to the first three arrivals at the end of the march, in which there were 700 participants.

Receiving the Queen upon arrival at the Orthodox Club were the Minister of Youth, the president of the Center for the Rehabilitation and Training of the Blind, as well as the director of the Orthodox Club.

Prince Mohammad turns 53

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Prince Mohammad, the Personal Representative of His Majesty King Hussein, Saturday celebrates his 53rd birthday. Born on Oct. 2, 1940, Prince Mohammad received his elementary education at the Scientific Islamic College in Amman.

He pursued his academic studies in Switzerland and Britain, and in 1956 joined the Military College in Bagdad for one year.

The Prince acted as Regent on several occasions, and on Nov. 11, 1973 he was appointed Personal Representative of King Hussein.

Prince Mohammad has assumed several posts including the Presidency of the Jordanian Tribal Chiefs Council in 1971 and the Presidency of the Higher Tourism Council in 1972.

He is president of the Jordanian Shooting Federa-



Princess Taghrid in March 1981. He has two sons, Their Royal Highnesses Prince Talal and Prince Ghazi.

Prince Mohammad married Her Royal Highness

Ministry to celebrate Arab Child Day with children's carnival in Amman

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Culture announced that a children's carnival will be held in Amman next month to mark Arab Child Day and the start of the Second Jordanian Children's Festival.

Wafa Qusous, director of the ministry's Children's Culture Department, who made the announcement, said the carnival entails a sponsored march which is to start at the Royal Cultural Centre and end at the King Abdullah Gardens where an artistic

celebration will be held. Children taking part in the march are from government and private schools, orphanages, the SOS Children's Village, as well as children of employees in Arab and foreign embassies in Amman, she said.

According to Ms. Qusous, decorated cars and musical bands will accompany the marchers together with people dressed in national costumes.

The proceeds of the march to be held on Oct. 8, will benefit the local theatre groups

who will present performances in November.

Seven plays will be presented in November mainly for children, she added.

Ms. Qusous said the ministry will hold a workshop on children's songs on Oct. 25 with the participation of script writers and musicians.

The two-day workshop, to be held at the Royal Cultural Centre, she said, will review working papers dealing with children's songs and music.

First regional seminar on use of pesticides in horticulture to focus on Jordan experience

AMMAN (J.T.) — The first regional seminar on the use of pesticides in horticulture in the Middle East will start in Amman on Monday, according to French embassy statement. The Ministry of Agriculture, together with the Delegation of the European Communities and the French embassy in Amman joined efforts to bring together representatives of eight countries of the region who will convene to discuss a vital subject for the economy, environment and health," said the statement.

Regional producers will exchange views on their field experience in particular, the news of Jordanian fruit-growers' associations.

According to the statement, the Jordanian side is fully aware of the economic and ecological importance of a

more appropriate use of pesticides. But, it said, Jordanian farmers are unaware of the existence of toxic pesticide residues in their products.

The goal of the 3-day seminar is to allow participating parties to exchange theoretical and practical views on a reasonable use of pesticides, said the statement.

Among the themes that will be discussed are:

30,000 feared dead in quake

(Continued from page 1)

quake zones in Nicaragua, Egypt and Indonesia.

In Tokyo, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said it was placing at India's disposal the Japan Disaster Relief Team, a highly-trained rescue unit that had already been to earth-

Jordan sets course for intricate water sharing talks

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Now that Jordan and Israel have signed an agenda outlining principles for a peace agreement, a top Jordanian negotiator is poised to plunge deep into one of the thorniest issues of the complex Middle East conflict — water sharing.

Munther Haddadin, a leading expert on water, says that most of the groundwork has already been done in "informal discussions" with Israel during the 12 rounds of bilateral talks with the Jewish state and during the several meetings of a working group of the multi-lateral phase of the two-year-old peace process.

"All discussions so far were informal since there was no agenda," Dr. Haddadin said. "Now that we have an agenda, we can make real progress in discussing the issues in detail."

The quest for water, a rare commodity in the mostly desert Middle East, is seen as one of the key reasons for the several wars that the region has witnessed in the last 50 years. And it promises to be one of the most complex issues that would need intricate negotiations before an equitable settlement could be achieved.

Speaking in an interview with the Jordan Times, Dr. Haddadin said Jordan was keeping all options open to address the creeping shortage of water and the increasing depletion of underground sources facing all parties involved in the Middle East conflict.

Every water source in the region, from Jordan River and its tributaries to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Iraq, as well as the waters of the Red Sea and Mediterranean, has

been mentioned as part of solution to quench the thirst of the region at various points in the last 40 years, but no progress could be made because of the fundamental political divide between Israel and the Arabs, as well as Arab differences.

Dr. Haddadin indicated that one of the centre-pieces of the Jordanian approach to the water problem is an effort to stem the declining level of the Dead Sea, which in turn leads to depletion of aquifers on its shores.

He said the Dead Sea had lost up to 16 metres of its historic level as a result of the diminishing volume of water from the Jordan River, evaporation and industrial use by mineral extracting plants on the Jordanian and Israeli shores.

The declining level, he explained, leads to seepages from the aquifer in the area.

"It is important to keep the Dead Sea at its historic level," he said. "The importance of that is environmental, but (also) the preservation of aquifers on our sides."

"Cracks in the geological formations provide flow channels to the Dead Sea."

The phenomenon is not new, and Jordan had drawn up a project as far back as 1981 to address the problem, said Dr. Haddadin, who served the Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) for 20 years, the last five as its director-general.

"It is purely a Jordanian plan and is not an Israeli plan as some people have suggested," he emphasised. "The JVA conducted the study on its own."

The project involves digging a pipeline-cum-canal from the Red Sea, 280 kilometres to the south, to the Dead Sea to



Munther Haddadin

maintain the level by pumping up to 1.2 billion cubic metres per year — slightly less than what the Jordan River used to dump there decades ago.

The additional advantages of the project, which will benefit all the three riparians — Jordan, Israel and the Palestinians — include possibilities of desalination of the Red Sea water, development of the arid, mostly desert region in the south, as well as hydro-electric power generation, Dr. Haddadin said.

He said the project cost, at today's prices, was estimated at \$1.5 billion.

Israel had also drawn up a similar project, but it envisaged linking the Mediterranean Sea to the Dead Sea. The project, estimated to cost \$3 billion, was shelved six years ago because of the high cost.

But the Sept. 13 agreement signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) includes a clear reference to the project and does not mention the Jordanian project involving the Red Sea.

Dr. Haddadin noted that any project involving water needs the "endorsement of all riparians" — meaning that the Israeli project needs Jordanian and Palestinian approvals the same way the Jordanian project needs Israeli and Palestinian approvals.

Jordan and Israel signed their agenda for peace talks on Sept. 14, one day after the PLO and the Jewish state signed their accord.

Dr. Haddadin categorically states that there was no forum for Jordanian and Israeli water negotiators except within the framework of the peace process, and the two sides had not held clandestine talks.

"Water negotiations are only in the context of the bilateral and multilateral negotiations," he said.

Dr. Haddadin said Jordan's approach to cooperation with Israel was based on a sequential strategy — "restoration" of Arab rights, "mitigation" of damages suffered during Israel's occupation of Arab territories and "cooperation."

The former chief of the JVA denied that Jordan was seeking the implementation of 1955 proposal drawn up by U.S. envoy Eric Johnson on water sharing among Jordan, Syria and Israel.

"There is no Johnston agreement," he stated flatly. "The U.S. required compliance with the 1955 proposal (as a condition for) financing any project within the Jordan Valley project."

Expressing readiness to support the establishment of homes for the aged, Minister of Social Development Mohammad Al Sqour Thursday said in a statement that the ministry would promptly issue licences for any organisation wishing to open senior-citizen homes and was continuing to cooperate with similar established institutions.

Through agreements concluded with several voluntary and other organisations, the ministry currently provides assistance to 160 senior citizens by supplying food, medicine and financial aid, said the minister.

Dr. Sqour said attention should be focused on helping the elderly to lead a comfortable and dignified life, as they have contributed towards the development and progress of their community.

Pressures of the modern world and rapid population growth have led to a neglect of many of the older members of

"Any updating of such criteria will not be of our making alone. We will not embark on theories or criteria which have not been accepted by the world community and found their way into bilateral agreements among other riparians elsewhere in the world," he stressed.

He said Jordan was getting 120 million cubic metres of water from the Jordan River and its tributaries compared with the 737 million cubic metres that Israel receives and 170 million cubic metres that Syria gets.

Total annual consumption of water in Jordan today is around 680 million cubic metres.

To make up for the shortfall, Jordan is forced to turn to tapping nine of its 10 subterranean aquifers at a rate which is alarming, Dr. Haddadin said. "We are using a lot more than reason dictates we should. We are posing a danger to our ground water if this current rate of use continues."

Jordan is open to all options, including those involving water from the Euphrates River which is controlled by Turkey, he said, suggesting that Turkey could be given incentives to allow the free flow of the waters down through Syria to Iraq, where they could be trapped and channelled in Jordan.

Regardless of its decades-old grievances of being denied its rightful share, Dr. Haddadin said, Jordan was receptive to all ideas and suggestions as long as it could find goodwill on all sides.

"When you are ready to share, then it is evidence that you care," he said.

"You cannot cooperate with someone if you feel he is going to stab you in the back."

Officials discuss election arrangements

AMMAN (J.T.) — As Oct. 14, the date when candidates for the Nov. 8 parliamentary elections can start their campaigns draws near Interior Minister Salameh Haddadin warned that legal action would be taken against anyone violating laws and regulations concerning campaigning.

Speaking after a meeting on Thursday, presided over the Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali, to discuss arrangements for the elections, Mr. Haddadin said the ministry was coordinating matters with the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment and other concerned authorities to assign specific areas in towns and cities where campaigning will be allowed.

The meeting, which was attended by provincial governors at the ministry of interior, discussed arrangements for the distribution of voter cards and assigning voting centres in various governorates, said Mr. Haddadin.

He said the meeting also studied the formation of committees, which could number up to 1,500, that would be in charge of supervising the voting procedures.

Mr. Haddadin said that committee members would be sworn in prior to their mission.

The prime minister urged



Salameh Haddadin

the governors to facilitate the distribution of voter cards in their respective regions and explain to the public the importance of voting in enhancing democracy in the Kingdom.

According to the ministry of interior, 12,069 people have been allowed to change their voter districts.

The ministry said that nomination of candidates for the coming elections will take place during a three-day period starting Oct. 14, and election campaigns would last until Nov. 7, the day preceding the elections day.

Gas-powered electricity gets another boost

AL RISHEH (Petra) — The Jordan Electricity Authority (JEA) plans to carry out projects worth JD350 million over the next five years to boost electric power generation utilising gas energy produced at Al Risheh in east Jordan close to the border with Iraq, according to JEA Director General Mohammad Saeed Arshaf.

The plant entail expanding the thermal power station in Aqaba by the year 1996 and the installation of three new gas-run turbines at the Risheh area early in 1994 said Mr. Arshaf in a speech at a ceremony held Thursday at Al Risheh gas fields marking the start of work on a third gas-powered electric unit.

The ceremony was also held to celebrate the expansion of annual gas production from 23 million cubic feet to 50 million.

Nearly 95.5 per cent of Jordan's population is served with electric power, 12 per cent of which is generated through the utilisation of natural gas produced at Al Risheh, Mr. Arshaf explained.

He said with the installation of the third gas generating unit, 15 per cent of the Kingdom's electric power needs

would be achieved saving the country the cost of 1.4 million barrels of oil that would have otherwise been used to produce the power each year.

Noting the utilisation of Al Risheh gas started in 1989, Mr. Arshaf said electric power has since been fed into the national power grid via a 132 kilovolt line extending for 220 kilometres linking Al Risheh with Al Azraq.

The project, Mr. Arshaf said, was implemented in cooperation with Petro Canada which he said, has been helping the Natural Resources Authority (NRA) in Jordan since 1986.

According to Mohammad Abu Ajameich, the NRA acting director, the boost in the gas production would save the country some \$15 million worth of diesel oil annually.

He said that Petro Canada has financed the expansion project and also is financing studies towards further exploration of gas reserves at a site 50 kilometres away from Al Risheh fields.

Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Walid Asfour attended the ceremony on behalf of His Majesty King Hussein.

WHAT'S GOING ON

- * Exhibition of paintings and old manuscripts at the Royal Cultural Centre.

- * Painting exhibition by artist Fateh Mondarres at the Baladna Art Gallery.

- * Art exhibition entitled "Eastern Dancing — Entertainment in Spare Time" by Sigrid Bensemann at Goethe Institute.

- * The First International Festival of Fine Arts in Jordan entitled "Colour and Light in the Nabataean Civilisation" at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts in Jordan.

- * Permanent exhibition of 58 artists and "Chair" exhibition at Darat Al Funun of the Abdul Hamid Shoman Foundation in Jabal Luweibdeh (10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Fridays 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.). Tel. 643251-2

- * Film in German entitled "Prisma-Kulturmagazin" at the

Jordan Times

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Donors looking all sides

SUCH IS the strength of the international commitment to contribute financially and economically to the reconstruction of the occupied territories that the EC countries appear to be at loggerheads with the U.S. over who should direct and manage the aid package for the Palestinians. On the one hand, Washington seeks to put the World Bank in charge of the huge operation. Brussels, on the other hand, insists on steering the funds that would have been pledged during the conference on reconstruction aid to Palestine that was held yesterday in Washington. The friction between the Western groups eager to spearhead the redevelopment of the liberated Palestinian territories cannot be expected to last long since vying for credit and prestige is not the main concern for the Middle East region as a whole.

True, the West Bank and Gaza Strip need and deserve big money for reconstruction and institution-building after over a quarter of a century of Israeli occupation. Emergency funding is obviously required to build up the infrastructure of a new state soon to take root in the wake of the PLO-Israel accord. The peace package orchestrated for the Palestinians calls for an aid programme on a scale that has not been witnessed in a long time. The effort is formidable since the objective is to create and establish a state right from scratch and a new order out of chaos.

Still, there is no way that the economic well-being and subsequently the political viability of the newly-born Palestinian entity can be attained in isolation from overall and comprehensive stability and development of the region. The political and economic success of the Palestinians is to a large extent dependent on the economic strength of the surrounding region starting with their immediate Arab neighbours, especially Jordan and Lebanon. Beirut is already seeking a \$10 billion aid package from the international community. Whether the amount requested is proportional to the objectives in mind, the stability and viability of Lebanon remains vital to the success of regional peace on which the Palestinian dimension is dependent.

The same goes for Jordan which is geographically, economically and socially the closest neighbour of the Palestinians. Amman has been and will always be the principal partner of the Palestinians on every conceivable level. These conditions would necessitate a comprehensive aid planning for the Near East in addition to the specific and urgent requirements of the Palestinian state in the making.

Yesterday's meeting of donors would have done well to take the area's overall needs while earmarking emergency and short to long terms financial and economic support to the Palestinians. After all, investment in peace in the Middle East would not be complete without addressing the regional dimensions of peace after war.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

BACKED BY THE UNITED STATES, Israel is now trying to cash in on the PLO-Israeli agreement on Palestinian self-rule although no peace has yet materialised and no Israeli withdrawal has taken place from the occupied lands, said Sawi Al Shabab Arabic daily. Israel is now moving speedily to end the Arab countries' boycott of Israel, economically, commercially and culturally, demanding that this is a reward for signing the PLO-Israeli deal on Gaza and Jericho, said the daily. By continually announcing that Jerusalem would continue to remain Israel's united capital, Israeli statesmen are not making it any easier for the implementation of agreements with the Arabs and the Palestinians to arrive at a lasting peace, said the daily. Furthermore, Israel is aiming at this stage to achieve economic ambitions in the Arab region without retreating from its adamant stand concerning the Golan Heights in addition to Jerusalem as it believes that it can reap the benefits of peace without achieving it, continued the paper. By refusing to see an independent Palestinian state established on Palestinian soil, by ignoring the rights of the refugees and by procrastinating the pulling out from the occupied Lebanese and Syrian lands, Israel, said the paper, is clearly playing for time and hoping that the Arabs would fall into the trap of ending the boycott regulations.

NOW THAT the announcement has been made for holding the elections on schedule, the ball is in the court of the political parties said Saleh Al Qalah, a columnist in Al Dustour daily. These parties should now rise to the occasion and prove their ability to shoulder responsibilities and confront the challenge of democracy, demanded the writer.

Jordanian Perspective

By Dr. Musa Keilani

Decision on elections 'turns a new leaf in Jordanian-Palestinian relations'

SURPRISING AS it is, the decision by His Majesty King Hussein to hold general elections as scheduled on Nov. 8, after weeks of speculation in the country, has come as a clear affirmation of three distinct characteristics of Jordanian policy and turns a new leaf in Jordanian-Palestinian relations.

It could be said that external considerations and foreign policy objectives also played a key role in what many politicians here describe as a stunning decision, but a closer look at the elements that guide Jordan's course will indicate that it was internal factors that came into decisive play during a few hours between Monday evening and Tuesday afternoon last week when everybody appeared to have resigned to accepting a delay of the polls until June 15, 1994.

First and foremost, the decision goes a long way in reassuring Jordanian voters of West Bank origin that they are now on an equal footing with East Bankers. In essence, the message is simple and clear: Whether a Nahrizi, Khalili or Jerusalemite or from any other part of the West Bank, they are as equal in rights and responsibilities as a Bani Hassan, Huweitat, Adwan, Bani Sakr or Shaalan in Jordanian decision-making.

Such a reassurance to the "refugees" from 1948, the "displaced" from 1967 and the "returnees" from 1990-92 was much too vital to be brushed aside for any other considerations, given the strong fibre that the West Bankers offer to the Jordanian society.

The fact that Jordan's first multi-party elections will be held in the same format as it was before Aug. 20, the day when the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) secret agreement was let out of the Oslo bag, blocks the way for the so-called Palestinian Likudniks and Israeli hardliners in the West Bank in their pursuit of discrediting the Kingdom. Obviously their objective was to cast serious doubts on Jordan's sincerity towards its citizens of Palestinian origin and create a confusion conducive to undermining the carefully-nurtured Arab-Israeli peace process.

The implications of the Israel-PLO accord and speculation over the fate of Palestinians in the diaspora will definitely be a factor when voters go to the polls on Nov. 8. However, to assume that the polls will definitely produce a rejectionist, hardline parliament which will spoil the peace process by ruling out any agreement with Israel is too short-sighted. Let

us not overlook a distinct factor — that by and large, Jordanians of Palestinian origin have as much stake in ensuring the security and stability of Jordan as anyone else.

It is one thing to express hardline views, but it is a totally different story when it comes to realising that one's ballot could also be the paper that could seriously disrupt life in the society where one makes a living and brings up his or her family in a safe and secure environment.

The record of the Jordanian society over the years has left little doubt that an overwhelming majority of the Kingdom's citizens is fully aware of the pitfalls that await them if they turn to hardline approaches, given the realities on the ground.

I have no doubts in my mind that the course of Jordan since its inception, and particularly under the reign of King Hussein, has established beyond any doubt among the citizens, whether before the creation of the state of Israel or after, that they are the fortunate among the Arabs of the Levant in recent history.

Examples stare us in the face of how some of our brethren in our neighbourhood were not as lucky as we were and are today to have enjoyed the trappings of a relatively free society where citizens can not only voice their opinion but also be assured that their voices would be heard and listened to instead of being censored off.

Along the same line of thinking, however, it is also naive to expect that concerns for security and stability could totally shut out the so-called hardliners from legislative power. The very nature of democracy dictates that a strong opposition is a sine qua non for a constructive society if only because it deprives the executive authority of a free hand to run things according to its whims and fancies.

Equally important in the context of Jordan is the fact that the "opposition" in this country has always been largely "domesticated" and those who shout at the top of their voices, for whatever reason, against peace with Israel have not descended on us from a different planet. They are very much from among us and barbour as much concern as any citizen to prevent chaos from taking over.

It will not be an overstatement to say that the so-called hardliners among us are perhaps the one segment of the Jordanian society which understands better and is fully aware of the "red line" beyond which lies the uncertain that would spare no one among us.



NATO enters minefield in Eastern Europe debate

By Nicholas Dougherty

Reuter

BRUSSELS — NATO has stepped into a political and diplomatic minefield as it considers, for the first time since the end of the cold war, whether to take on some of its former enemies in Eastern Europe as members.

Many of those countries are clamouring for shelter from the dangers of an increasingly unstable Europe and the 16-nation alliance knows it must do something to help, if it is not to be written off as irrelevant.

But the dilemma for NATO, as it heads towards a summit in January, is how to improve security to the East while avoiding other risks in taking on more members — risks which could do nearly as much damage to the alliance.

"I don't think anyone is proposing that NATO will be quickly or immediately enlarged so far as full membership is concerned," British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said recently.

"On the other hand, we certainly don't wish to rebuff their desire to come closer to NATO."

Diplomats say it is most unlikely the summit will offer full membership to any country because most NATO members oppose such a move before the 21st century.

"This is going to be an enormously difficult problem," said a senior NATO diplomat, who asked not to be named.

"We have to ask whether extending membership would weaken the cohesion of NATO as it now is, whether we would

upset Russia and others who would be left out and whether we could end up ensnared in more Yugoslav-style ethnic conflicts."

The crisis in Russia has served as a timely reminder to NATO that the West could face trouble if Mr. Yeltsin loses power and reforms stop. The war in former Yugoslavia shows the kind of vicious ethnic conflict which might involve NATO if it expands.

There is also the problem of whether countries like Poland and Hungary — the most obvious first choices for NATO membership — should join the European Community, as the EC has recognised they will.

Until recently, these problems were not even on the agenda.

Ever since the end of East-West confrontation, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has said it was premature to discuss expanding membership of the 43-year-old club.

Instead, it set up the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), which brings NATO members, Eastern European nations and former Soviet republics together in diplomatic links.

Although there are plans to use the NACC for more practical activities such as joint peacekeeping, most Eastern European nations say such cooperation has not gone far enough.

One of the major arguments against taking on new members has always been that Russia might object and that such a move would be seen as an

aggressive expansion eastwards by NATO, but which points clearly in that direction.

One idea would be to allow Poland, Hungary and a few others to accede to NATO's 1949 founding treaty, with the exception of a key article that contains the essential security guarantee.

That article states that an attack on one member state will be treated as an attack on all.

Such a move would still give new members, who would then have the prospect of becoming full members a few years later, the right to consult with NATO if their security is threatened.

Criteria would be established to decide who could come in — including commitments to democracy and human rights, protection for minorities and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The second issue will be how to make this into a kind of "package deal" that will also include something for other Eastern European nations and former Soviet republics, so they will not feel their level of security has been reduced.

One way of doing that would be a commitment that any new members would not have NATO forces stationed on their soil in peacetime — something that already applies to some existing members such as Norway.

Another suggestion is to offer countries like Russia and Ukraine, which have little real prospect of joining NATO, a separate kind of security treaty that would go further than current diplomatic and military links with the alliance.

The Week in Print

Elections on time: Promoting democracy, maintaining national unity

Reviewed by Elia Nasrallah

THE ANNOUNCEMENT

that the coming elections would be held on schedule, reactions to the PLO-Israel agreement and a host of domestic issues were given prominence in the local press during the past week.

A columnist in Al Ra'i said that by keeping the Nov. 8 elections date unchanged, the government has maintained the normal political life of the country and avoided any negative impact on the democratisation process.

The decision meant clearly that the government is giving more attention to maintaining national unity and promoting democracy than other considerations, said Mahmoud Rimawi.

He said the decision has been met with nation-wide welcome since it is bound to ensure the continuation of parliamentary life regardless of the developments in the Middle East region.

Under the title of "A Wise Decision" columnist Ahmad Al Misch said that the government decision on the elections day has put an end to confusion and rumours.

The decision was in fact a catalyst to speed up the process of democratisation since it would ensure the undisturbed parliamentary rule in the country, said the writer who writes for Al Dustour daily.

The road to full exercise of democracy in Jordan, he said, should never be derailed or diverted by the influence of other political developments.

Hanadeth Faraneb, a columnist in Al Dustour, said the government decision pumped new blood in the veins of democracy and opened the door for the resumption of activities by candidates and political groups in preparation for the elections campaign.

The candidates, he added, are now faced with the challenge of convincing an electorate, influenced by domestic and external political developments, of their sincerity to work towards serving national interests.

Now that the elections day has been fixed, it is hoped that the election campaign would focus attention on safeguarding the higher national interests, said Taher Udwan, a columnist in Al Dustour.

The writer said that the absence of a Parliament at a time when crucial events are taking place would have been detrimental to the Kingdom.

It is true that the coming elections would be a purely internal affair for Jordan, but the recent developments and the PLO-Israel deal are bound to influence the electorate and the candidates alike, said Ahmad Dabbas in Sawi Al Shaab daily.

The writer said that the most crucial thing at the moment is to maintain a strong national unity while the people are allowed to exercise and enhance democracy in the country.

Referring to the PLO-Israel deal, Mahmud Rimawi said in Al Ra'i daily that despite the agreement, peace seems to be still far off and out of reach largely due to Israel's persistence that Jerusalem would remain the capital of Israel.

The writer said that Israel is trying to delay its withdrawal of forces, is holding on to Jerusalem and is ignoring the rights of the 1948 refugees in a manner that shows it is not committed to a just peace.

The Arab parties to the peace negotiations should ensure that the Israelis reach progress and final solutions along all the tracks, simultaneously, if a lasting peace is to be established, he added.

Mohammad Kawash, a columnist in Al Dustour, criticised the Israeli prime minister and the U.S. President Bill Clinton who, he said, are acting to strengthen Israel's economy at this stage and even before any peace agree-

ment has been signed.

The writer said that the United States is backing Israel's attempts to end the Arab boycott of Israeli goods in a manner that would bolster the Jewish state's economic power and make gains in the Arab World without having to sign peace treaties with its countries.

We do not wish to see a peace that would give Israel a greater chance to carry out its objectives and we do not want a peace treaty if it is not comprehensive and just, stressed the writer.

Now that the PLO-Israel deal has become a fact, the PLO-Jordanian committee discussing future cooperation ought to step up their efforts and raise the level of their discussions to cover economic, social and political areas, said Sawi Al Shaab.

The paper said that Palestinian-Jordanian links are deep and intertwined and they should be safeguarded regardless of the PLO-Israel agreement on self-rule.

Furthermore, the paper demanded that the committees provide facilities for the 1967 refugees to return to their homeland once they are able to do so under the PLO-Israel agreement.

"By keeping the Nov. 8 elections date unchanged, the government has maintained the normal political life of the country and avoided any negative impact on the democratisation process. The decision meant clearly that the government is giving more attention to maintaining national unity and promoting democracy than other considerations."

Salamch Ekour said that any peace agreement which does not ensure the return of the 1948 and 1967 refugees to their homeland is not just. The writer said in Sawi Al Shaab that any refugee who is entitled to return but fails to do so, does not deserve any citizenship in Jordan, in Palestine or in any other Arab country.

The writer said that the absence of a Parliament at a time when crucial events are taking place would have been detrimental to the Kingdom.

It is true that the coming elections would be a purely internal affair for Jordan, but the recent developments and the PLO-Israel deal are bound to influence the electorate and the candidates alike, said Ahmad Dabbas in Sawi Al Shaab daily.

The writer said that the most crucial thing at the moment is to maintain a strong national unity while the people are allowed to exercise and enhance democracy in the country.

Referring to the PLO-Israel deal, Mahmud Rimawi said in Al Ra'i daily that despite the agreement, peace seems to be still far off and out of reach largely due to Israel's persistence that Jerusalem would remain the capital of Israel.

The writer said that Israel is trying to delay its withdrawal of forces, is holding on to Jerusalem and is ignoring the rights of the 1948 refugees in a manner that shows it is not committed to a just peace.

Women in Jordan have succeeded in ensuring their own independence from men and in assuming posts as doctors, engineers, university professors and in many other fields, but married women are not allowed to travel abroad without a written approval from their husbands, said Kawash. The writer said that the government ought to amend the current legislation and give women more freedom as the world is fast approaching the advent of the 21st century.

Focus on liberalisation

(Continued from page 1)

between East Bank Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin, including the refugees from the 1967 war, and threaten the social fabric of the country.

Mr. Kabariti cited "solidarity, security and the best interests of the country" as the core concerns of the leadership. "Survival of the state was not in question, but the thriving (of the Kingdom) and how we can fit into the new world order was at stake," he said. In view of the latest political developments, a restructuring of the Jordanian position was necessary, he added. "For the new regional order we need a new Jordanian order, a comprehensive strategy (for the future)."

The secretary-general of the Islamic Action Front (IAF), Ishaq Farhan, said that "the situation was not so complicated as to warrant postponing the elections," and, based on this, his group did "not recommend a postponement."

He feared that a decision to put off the election would "give a free hand to the government" to do what it wants without parliamentary control and jeopardise the democratic debate, which depends on a dialogue between the government and the opposition.

The proponents of holding elections on time, who had been represented mainly by intellectuals and writers, saw "postponement as a definite setback to democracy. They argued that the participation of the people in an open debate, regardless of the sensitivity of the issue at stake, was essential and did not see such an exchange as posing any threat to the security of the state. While Dr. Farhan viewed delaying the elections as unfavourable to Jordan's democratic development, Mr. Kabariti could not see a situation where such a step would mean the reversal of the democratisation process.

But positions adopted in the debate between the opponents and proponents of holding elections on time largely reflected ideological and party lines on the democratisation in the country as a whole.

Adnan Abu Odeh, Jordan's ambassador to the United Nations and the founder of the now divided Progress and Justice Party, believes that there is no other form of democracy except that of the Western-style representative system. However, he conceded in recent interview that one needs to advance gradually so as not to step on socio-economic, traditional and cultural landmines along the way.

In the view of Mr. Kabariti, Jordan needs to develop its own model of democracy for it to work. He said that "there are specificities in the Jordanian example that cannot be ignored. We need an arrangement which preserves the balance of power and prevents confrontation. We need an example which unites and does not divide."

Jordan's democracy "is different from all Western democracies because we have a constitutional monarchy and the Monarch is the head of the three branches of government—the executive, the legislative and the judiciary," Mr. Kabariti said. "The King rules through his ministers and legislates through Parliament, and courts' rulings are issued in his name... No Western democracy has this system," he said. "There is no model for democracy that any nation could follow. There is a process which could advance, stagnate or regress. It all depends on the many factors, internal and external, including the economic situation."

Furthermore, Mr. Kabariti does not agree that Jordan's democratisation has unleashed a monster that could not be controlled.

Prominent Jordanian lawyer and former cabinet minister, Taher Hikmat agrees with Mr. Kabariti in that Jordan has to develop its own model of democracy. "We cannot copy Western democracy," he told the Jordan Times earlier this week.

Mr. Hikmat said that effort needs to be put into developing a democratic system which incorporates universal democratic values but which is adapted to the particular features of the Jordanian society.

Mr. Hikmat, however, saw the political actors' lack of understanding of social, economic and demographical factors as the largest threat to democracy. Pointing to what he called "the remnants of

the authoritarian regime," he said that it would take time to change the mentality and to educate people in democratic values. "We need time, and we need real representation," he said.

Both Mr. Kabariti and Mr. Hikmat made a link between democracy and economy. "We need enough time and enough economic growth so that the economic hotspots do not lead to social problems which might turn into political crisis hindering our democratisation," Mr. Kabariti said.

He called the potential problem a triangle of three Ds—debt, development and democracy—one dependent on the other. His logic is that if there was a debt burden, development was bound to be impeded, and if development was blocked, democracy would be threatened. "Debt hinders proper development," Mr. Kabariti argued. "And without development, you cannot have an open-ended demo-

cracy."

On the reversibility of the democratisation process, the IAF's Dr. Farhan said: "I really hope that we have already reached the point of no return." Reversing the democratic choice, he continued, "could lead to a collapse of people's confidence in the state and a damage to the credibility of (Jordanian) governments for decades to come."

Furthermore, Dr. Farhan said, this would tarnish Jordan's political image in the Arab World and the rest of the world. "This is why it is in everybody's interest—the regime, the people and the political parties that this democratisation process does not falter."

Dr. Jamal Sha'er, a founder of Unionist Arab Democratic Party and a former minister takes a different stand from Mr. Kabariti and Dr. Farhan by firmly dismissing that the process can be controlled: "No, the democratisation process is not reversible. The process has grown tough with sharp nails. If anyone tries to scratch it, it will scratch back."

Donors pledge nearly \$2 b

(Continued from page 1)

U.S. Vice-President Al Gore opened the five-hour conference urging businessmen around the world to help out, as well. The theory is that an economically sound Palestinian administration would be inclined to live in peace with Israel and join with it to promote economic well-being throughout the region.

Mr. Gore said: "The presence of so many parties from both inside and outside the Middle East itself sends a strong signal of hope." He also exhorted Arab countries to end the boycott of Israel, which dates back more than 40 years.

Mr. Peres announced the Israeli offer of assistance in his opening statement.

"Israel will work closely with Palestinians and Jordanians to help create flourishing economic triangle," he said. "We shall do it as neighbours. We do not seek to replace military presence by economic domination."

The biggest single pledge is \$600 million over five years from the 12-nation European Community (EC). The United States originally made a pledge of \$250 million over two years! After some European governments scolded Washington playing host to the conference with a pledge less than half that of the EC, the United States promised \$500 million over five years.

Japan pledged \$200 million over the first two years.

Mr. Peres's presence at the meeting itself was unprecedented since long-time Arab leaders are attending.

Mr. Peres sat near delegates from Saudi Arabia and wealthy Arab states. Initially, he did not mingle with them but was

later seen deep in conversation with Moroccan and Palestinian delegates.

Forty-three nations sent representatives to the aid conference, also attended by representatives of the PLO, the EC, the United Nations and the World Bank.

Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah ruled out direct assistance to the PLO's efforts to set up self-rule in the occupied territories.

But he did not exclude some form of Kuwaiti participation in the international programme to develop the territories.

"The government is not willing to support the one who stabbed us and who backed our enemy," Sheikh Saad said in reference to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, whom Kuwait has accused of siding with Iraq during the Gulf war.

Sheikh Saad was speaking with deputies who, according to the daily, strongly opposed "any assistance to the PLO" and called for coordination among the six-country Gulf Cooperation Council of which Kuwait is a member.

"Any decision must be based on the interests of Kuwait," Sheikh Saad, who is also crown prince, told the deputies.

He said Kuwait could participate in the international effort to set up self-rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho.

But Kuwait's contribution "will not be similar to the participation of other (GCC) states," Sheikh Saad added. He did not elaborate.

Mr. Christopher met on Thursday representatives of the GCC.

'Jordan needs support'

(Continued from page 1)

for our own talks with Israel. We now look forward to negotiating issues of substance, such as the vital issue of refugees, on the basis of international law.

Jordan, nearest to the core of the conflict, has shouldered an enormous human load. We have given shelter to three waves of displaced Palestinians—in 1948, 1967, and 1991. These refugees—about 1.7 million individuals—account today for one third of Jordan's population. Less than 300,000 are still in camps: 300,000 too many. For Jordan is committed to providing all of its population with the stable and decent environment that goes hand in hand with peace-making and human resource development. Our citizens, whether of Palestinian or Jordanian origin, enjoy civil and human rights equally and participate as equals in our democratisation process. But our human policies have demanded greater sacrifices from our people.

As a consequence of the conflict, Jordan faces a debt overhang of about \$7 billion one of the highest per capita ratios in the world. The Gulf crisis cost our national economy \$9 billion, a heavy blow to a country with a GNP (gross national product) half that figure. Yet we continue to enforce U.N. sanctions against Iraq. The exceptional support of the world community is desperately needed if Jordan is to keep shouldering its regional responsibilities and move towards peace, reconstruction and prosperity.

Jordan will do everything in its power to ensure the success of arrangements for Palestinian interim self-government. Indeed, we have already extended our assistance in institution-building and training. Our commitment is not in doubt. In 1986, we tried to start a development effort to support the people of the occupied territories. The world did not listen to our warning that the economic situation there was politically dangerous. But we do not want to dwell on the past. We want to applaud the fact that today, seven years later, leading members of the world community are gathered to answer our call. Let us now work together to rebuild the occupied territories, and the other parts of the region that have been devastated by conflict.

Although the Palestine question has always been the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the entire region has suffered. Peace, then, cannot be piecemeal: It must be comprehensive if it is to endure. The reality of interdependence in all fields requires this. If we are to fashion a commonwealth of

hope on our ancient soil, all must participate. All must have a say in shaping a new regional order, underpinned by trans-national, cooperative, holistic security. And all must be given the chance, and the tools, to play their part in this historic endeavour.

It is our blessing and our burden to live in such extraordinary times. The decisions made today will echo across the world, and down through history. The peoples of the Middle East are depending upon us; generations to come are suspended on our word. Let us be worthy of them; let us give them a chance to taste the fruits of peace. For though we can all walk away from this room, not one of us can walk away from these responsibilities.

Mr. Mubarak listed three principles which he said the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli treaty had established:

—Full implementation of the equation of land for peace.

—"Reaching acceptable security arrangements that protect the interests of the two parties and do not infringe the sovereignty of either."

—That the implementation of the concept of peace in relations between the treaty

Syrian papers see Christopher trip

(Continued from page 1)

"We would be prepared to give up the Golan in return for a real peace agreement with Syria," party leader Deri told the Maaviv newspaper.

"The preservation of life is more important than keeping sovereignty over the (occupied) territories," Mr. Deri said, quoting the spiritual leader of Shas, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef.

The six Shas deputies are part of the government coalition, but Mr. Deri was forced to resign from office three weeks ago over charges that he embezzled \$300,000 of public money.

"Handing back the Golan is in no way a religious problem," he said. "It's a simple question of security."

Shas would not try to block a return of the Golan. Syria made it clear to Israelis that it wants peace, Mr. Deri said.

Prince Hassan meets with Peres

(Continued from page 1)

tion of all Arash land, including East Jerusalem.

"His Royal Highness also stressed the importance of the comprehensiveness of peace through propelling the peace process forward to achieve serious progress on the Jordanian, Syrian and Lebanese tracks."

In another report, Petra said that during the 20-minute meeting, Prince Hassan presented the "consistent Jordanian stand vis-a-vis efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive (Middle East) peace that would be accepted by future generations."

"Such peace should correspond with the higher national interests and political invariance of Jordan based on clarity and away from surprises...." Petra said.

It added that the White House meeting was bound to "further boost the peace process into new horizons and deepens the commitment of the concerned parties towards achieving substantive results."

"Jordan's stance on the peace process emanated from its strong relations with the U.S., the major sponsor of the peace process," it said. "Jordan's continued efforts to up-

grade mutual relations would lead the U.S. to carry out its legal, political and moral role in the Madrid formula."

The Crown Prince stressed that "a just peace goes beyond protocols and media floodlights into addressing realities on the ground which includes the rights of refugees based on U.N. resolutions and their long-time plight. Peace should also address the outstanding problems of the region, including development impediments, waters, unemployment and security, and translating international legitimacy into reality."

Israeli media claimed His Majesty King Hussein met with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin last Sunday in the port of Aqaba. The Royal Palace in Amman and Mr. Rabin himself denied the report.

Following is the text of the statement that Mr. Clinton made to reporters after the Friday's White House meeting:

"Jordan's stance on the peace process emanated from its strong relations with the U.S., the major sponsor of the peace process," it said. "Jordan's critical role in achieving a lasting peace."

"In our meeting, both the Crown Prince and Foreign Minister (Peres) spoke of their hopes for a future of peace and prosperity for Israelis, Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese and Jordanians alike—indeed, for the whole region."

"To help work towards this goal of a real and enduring peace, they discussed ways to give impetus to their bilateral negotiations with a view to resolving all outstanding issues that will affect the lives of their people, with special emphasis on trade, finance, agriculture, and movement of peoples and ideas."

"They also spoke their commitment to close coordination with the Palestinians as the peace process goes forward."

"In this way, Jordao, Israel and the United States can act as partners with the Palestinians as we seek to advance our common goal of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. I look forward to working with the Crown Prince and Foreign Minister (Peres) in the future as we build the foundations of prosperity and hope between Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians and as we seek to spread the benefits of peace to all the people of the Middle East."



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Israel stock hopes rise on peace moves

TEL AVIV (R) — Swift and surprising Middle East peace moves have bolstered Israeli hopes of greater foreign investment and unprecedented gains on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange (TASE).

Stocks have soared since Israel signed a breakthrough accord last month with the PLO and announced a peace agenda with Jordan.

"Just look at the performance before the accord. The market was going absolutely nowhere," said Mark Meiras, managing director of Israel's Pacific Mediterranean Investments.

He said without the accords, investors would have backed off because of inflation and unemployment, poor second-quarter earnings and an official forecast for 1993 gross domestic product growth that fell from 4.8 per cent to 4.3 and then to 4.0.

"But now with the peace dividend, it's a factor that enables them to invest," Mr. Meiras told Reuters.

Last month the exchange's Mishkanim blue chip share index has risen more than 20 points to around 230.

Mr. Meiras said if earnings continued to grow, Middle East peacemaking thrived and the economy picked up, the index could more than double to 500 by mid-1995.

All this is tempered by warn-

ings that Israel will be a gold mine soon — despite the breakthrough with the PLO. For foreign investors, the Middle East remains a risky region.

"It'll take years to unload that image," Arie Caspi, an economic commentator, wrote in the Jerusalem Report magazine. "Right now, out of the 1,000 biggest companies in the world, only five have significant investments in Israel," he wrote.

Bank of Israel governor Jacob Frenkel reminded investors in a radio interview last month that stock markets tend to reflect expectations and these could be over-optimistic.

Mr. Meiras said it would take another five years before the region could prove to be truly investment-worthy. By then the Israel-PLO deal will have had time to prove itself and other Arab states may have made peace with Israel.

In any event, analysts said it was hard to imagine Arab stock markets competing with the Tel Aviv exchange. The exchange is automated, and perhaps the most developed in the region with the exception possibly of Turkey's.

Neighboring Jordan's exchange is small by comparison and a Palestinian market is at least five years off, they said.

The Israeli exchange has 503 companies offering more than

1,000 securities. Of the 503, 128 have been added to the exchange since the start of the year.

The Tel Aviv exchange also has ever-increasing liquidity.

About 100 million of stock is bought and sold daily on the Tel Aviv exchange compared to 20 million two-and-a-half years ago.

Regulations for foreign investors may also be the most relaxed of any Middle East country. Most restrictions were lifted last year.

Most analysts believe it is too early to predict which firms will benefit most from peace moves. But tourism, infrastructure and communications companies are the likeliest short-term candidates.

A promised sell-off of such government firms as the national airline El Al and the countries' banks has also buoyed investors' hopes.

Among Mr. Meiras's picks:

— Bezeq Phone Company: "If there's more trade, there's more phone calls."

— Israel Electric Company:

"Once they go public they'll be helping Palestinians set up their electric infrastructure."

— Dan Hotels and African

Israel Investments, which has a big hotel subsidiary, and even the four rental car firms which are traded on the exchange.

"People who want to visit Jordan will come to Israel first and then drive east in a rent-a-car."

Wide gaps remain between perceptions of World Bank, Palestinians on economic needs

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Wide gaps remain between the perceptions of the World Bank and Palestinian planners in assessing the economic needs of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip during the interim five-year period of Palestinian autonomy and beyond, negotiators and analysts say.

An upgraded version of the World Bank estimates is on the table at donors conference being held in Washington, but a major part of the disparities between the assessments by the bank and the Palestinians remains unaddressed. It raises the prospect of the donors coming up with pledges falling short of what the Palestinians deem as the minimum level of the needs of the occupied territories.

But the catch, analysts say, is that the World Bank upgraded its assessment from \$300 million to between \$500 million and \$550 million per year without committing itself to any timetable.

It appeared Thursday that the bank had downgraded the revised figures to between \$400 million and \$475 million per year.

Senior PLO officials have said that they would seek the repatriation of 675,000 Palestinians whom they describe as "displaced" by the 1967 war. The bulk of them live in Jordan and Syria.

The World Bank report did not make any provision for housing for the Palestinians, leaving it "as an exclusive private sector responsibility."

"We believe that the public sector should play a major role in housing in the initial stages," Dr. Abdullah said.

The Palestinian Development Plan calls for \$5.8 billion for housing in the occupied territories.

One of the main objectives of providing housing for the

University in the West Bank, said there were three distinct areas of differences between the Palestinian Development Plan and the World Bank assessment.

These, as told the Jordan Times on Wednesday, were:

— The World Bank did not take into consideration the possibility of "hundreds of thousands of Palestinians" returning to their homes subject to Israel-PLO negotiations, as provided for in the Sept. 13 autonomy agreement signed in Washington.

"The investment programme in infrastructure is too conservative" when this factor is taken into account, Dr. Abdullah said. He did not reveal what parameters the Palestinian plan considered to determine the number of Palestinians expected to return home.

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Palestinians — "turning the Balata refugee camp into the town of Balata for instance," as an analyst put it — is highly political in that a move from the squalid living conditions of refugee camps to proper houses will go a long way in turning many middle-of-the-road Palestinians into supporting the Israel-PLO accord.

"The course of the autonomy accord will be determined largely in the refugee camps of the Gaza Strip and West Bank," noted a Western diplomat familiar with the Palestinian plan. "It is very important for the proponents of the agreement not only to enlist the support of those who live in camps but also to do it fast."

The third point of difference between the Palestinian plan and the World Bank report is that the bank did not allow for the costs involved in repairing the port of Gaza and building an airport and road networks in the occupied territories, Dr. Abdullah said.

He did not give details of the Palestinian plan, but PLO officials said that initial projects include the upgrading of an airstrip in Jericho at a still unspecified cost, in addition to repairing the ancient Gaza seaport on the Mediterranean and building new roads.

Except for major highways linking key towns in the West Bank and those in and around Jerusalem, other areas in the occupied territories have only dilapidated ac-

U.S. poised for strong upswing, Bentsen says

WASHINGTON (R) — Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen has declared that the U.S. economy was poised for a "strong upswing" and called on America's allies to do their part to boost sluggish global growth.

In his most optimistic comments since taking office in January, Mr. Bentsen said low interest rates and inflation in the United States would lay a foundation for faster growth.

"Inflation and interest rates in the United States are now at their lowest level in two decades," Mr. Bentsen said. "The economy is preparing for a strong upswing."

"There are increasing signs that business investment is growing and that production will rise," he added.

His comments came a few hours after the government reported the U.S. economy grew at a modest 1.9 per cent rate in the second quarter after a meagre 0.8 per cent rise in the first quarter.

With the United States poised to pick up the pace of its weak recovery, Mr. Bentsen turned to rich allies to take more action to get their recession-hit economies back on track.

"We face the opportunity for a period of truly global

peace and prosperity," Mr. Bentsen told the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

"But... (that) will require a concerted and concentrated effort from all of us," he pointed out.

Mr. Bentsen lectured his fellow finance ministers that it was time to hock up words with action, rather than repeat a mantra — "recovery is just around the corner" — in the hopes that it will come true.

"After three years, this line is beginning to wear a little thin," he said. "Growth cannot

Ford to axe more than 1,000 jobs in Britain

LONDON (APF) — The Ford Motor Group is to axe between 1,000 and 1,400 jobs at its British plants before the end of the year, the group told the trade unions. The automaker, the largest in Britain, said it wished to improve productivity at its plants and adapt to the drop in demand in western Europe. Ford said the loss of jobs would be made good thanks to voluntary departures, adding that there would be no sackings. Up to 1,200 jobs, many of them temporary, will be axed at production sites, including some 450 at Dagenham, in southeastern England. Administration would be asked to shed 200 jobs. The group said it had progressively cut the number of employees from a total 72,000 in 1980 to 31,350 now, while increasing production. Thanks to these gains in productivity, the group had reduced its losses before tax in 1992 to £353 million (\$530 million), compared to £587 million in 1991. Ford U.K. sold 99,050 new cars in Britain in August.

Mr. Bentsen lectured his fellow finance ministers that it was time to hock up words with action, rather than repeat a mantra — "recovery is just around the corner" — in the hopes that it will come true.

He said the foundation was being laid for further interest rate cuts in Europe, confidently asserting that "inflation has been tamed."

"After three years, this line is beginning to wear a little thin," he said. "Growth cannot

be achieved by pronouncement — only by good policies."

He patted Washington on the back, noting that President Bill Clinton's budget will cut \$500 million from the deficit and free up savings for private investment the world over.

But saying that unemployment was still rising in the industrial world, he called on rich allies to move further down the path of growth.

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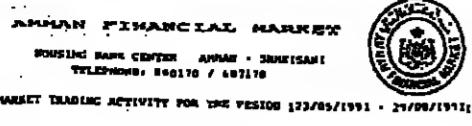
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GENERAL MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD 12/9/1993 - 24/9/1993

WEEKLY REPORT

COMPANY'S NAME	TRADING VOLUME	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	OPENING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE	PRICE
	JD	JD	JD	JD	JD
ABAD BANK	100,425	5.150	5.150	5.150	5.150
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	10,250	27.000	27.000	27.000	27.000
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK	28,547	4.150	4.150	4.250	4.250
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	173,483	2.950	2.950	3.000	3.000
THE BORING BANK	27,100	2.950	2.950	2.950	2.950
JORDAN BANK FOR TRADE & INDUSTRY	324,248	3.950	3.950	3.700	3.700
JORDAN INVESTMENT BANK	746,057	2.000	2.000	2.100	2.100
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	21,783	4.100	4.100	4.000	4.000
UNITED BANK FOR SAVING & INVESTMENT	7,142	4.050	4.050	4.050	4.050
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	76,412	4.150	4.150	4.200	4.200
BEST BANK SAVING & INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	23,775	3.700	3.700	3.700	3.700
ABAD BANK FOR INVESTMENT	46,940	8.500	8.500	8.500	8.500
ABAD BANK FOR INVESTMENT / JORDAN PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	376,140	1.900	1.900	2.000	2.000
JORDAN INSURANCE	18,478	4.250	4.250	4.300	4.300
ABARAH BANK FOR INSURANCE	20,420	3.500	3.500	3.500	3.500
JORDAN INSURANCE & REINSURANCE	126	3.000	3.000	3.000	3.000
JORDAN INSURANCE & REINSURANCE	211,710	2.700	2.700	2.700	2.700
JORDAN LIFE & ACCIDENT INSURANCE	33,775	3.700	3.700	3.700	3.700
JORDAN LIFE & ACCIDENT INSURANCE	16,200	3.500	3.500	3.500	3.500
THE NATIONAL BANK OF JORDAN	8,040	2.500	2.500	2.500	2.500
DELAQ INSURANCE	76	1.170	1.170	1.170	1.170
AL-JIER AL-AHARI INSURANCE	124	4.000	4.000	4.000	4.000
JORDAN PUBLIC INSURANCE	634,478	2.000	2.000	2.100	2.100
JORDAN HOTEL & TOURISM	11,431	1.200	1.200	1.200	1.200
ISRAELI STATE ELECTRICITY	7,347	7.200	7.200	7.000	7.000
JORDAN TELECOMS & POSTS & TELECOMS	10,000	10.000	10.000	10.000	10.000
JORDAN TOURISM & SPA COMPLEX	78,181	8.000	8.000	8.000	8.000
WELFARE & SECURITY	46,222	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	1,110	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
JORDAN GULF REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	59,170	8.500	8.500	8.500	8.500
PEST CONTROL EQUIPMENT & ENGINEERING	5,000	9.000	9.000	10.000	10.000
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL SERVICES	1,231	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
JORDAN INVESTMENT HOLDING	20,484	1.100	1.100	1.100	1.100
JORDAN FOUNDATION FOR AL-AZHAR	16,020	20.000	20.000	20.000	20.000
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & COMMERCIAL HOTELS	16,421	7.200	7.200	7.100	7.100
ABAD INTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	10,000	10.000	10.000	10.000	10.000
JORDAN PUBLIC RELATIONS	1,100	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
ATTACHEE CORRESPONDENCE	1,426,221	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000
MATERIAL MANUFACTURING	1,616	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000
JORDAN JEWELRY	1,100	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
JORDAN PETROLEUM COMPANY	116,467	10.000	10.000	10.000	10.000
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	1,231	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
JORDAN PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	10,000	10.000	10.000	10.000	10.000
JORDAN PLASTIC INDUSTRIES	15,642	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000
JORDAN SAIF	15,971	7.200	7.200	7.000	7.000
THE JORDAN GOLF MANUFACTURING	12,428	6.000	6.000	6.000	6.000
JORDAN METAL & CARBONATE FACTORIES	10,000	10.000	10.000	10.000	10.000
JORDAN RADICAL DEFENSIVE INDUSTRIES	4,000	2.500	2.500	2.500	2.500
JORDAN RADICAL DEFENSIVE INDUSTRIES	30,476	2.500	2.500	2.500	2.500
JORDAN PETROLEUM COMPANY	116,467	10.000	10.000	10.000	10.000
JORDAN PETROLEUM COMPANY	1,231	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
JORDAN PETROLEUM COMPANY	10,000	10.000	10.000	10.000	10.000
JORDAN PETROLEUM COMPANY	15,642	2.000	2.000	2.000	2.000
JORDAN PETROLEUM COMPANY	15,971	7.200	7.200	7.000	7.000
JORDAN PETROLEUM COMPANY	12,428	6.000	6.000	6.000	6.000
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JORDAN PETROLEUM COMPANY	4,000	2.500	2.500	2.500	2.500
JORDAN PETROLEUM COMPANY	30,476	2.500	2.500	2.500	2.500
JORDAN PETROLEUM COMPANY	116,467				

NATO may cut East Europe plans after Yeltsin warning

BRUSSELS (R) — NATO may be forced to scale back plans to admit some former Communist enemies as members after President Boris Yeltsin, fighting to keep control of Russia, warned the West not to push the alliance eastwards.

Mr. Yeltsin's dramatic appeal, which appeared to reverse earlier statements that it was up to countries such as Poland to decide whether to join NATO, came in a letter to Western governments this week, diplomats said.

Instead of expanding NATO, one of the key issues for an alliance summit in January, Mr. Yeltsin said Russia and the 16-nation North Atlantic Treaty Organisation should guarantee security in Eastern Europe together.

Countries such as Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are eager for NATO membership to protect them in an increasingly unstable Europe. Their hopes have risen recently and diplomats said they would be dismayed by Mr. Yeltsin's proposals.

"I think a cloud of gloom will settle over NATO on the enlargement issue and you can imagine what the Eastern Europeans will think about Russia guaranteeing their security, so soon after they got out from Moscow's shadow," said one diplomat.

The letter — sent to the United States, Britain, France and Germany — seemed aimed at reassuring the Russian military, whose support Mr. Yeltsin needs in his struggle with a conservative parliament.

A NATO spokesman declined all comment but other alliance sources said Mr. Yeltsin had written that if the alliance took on Eastern Euro-

pean members, it would provoke an adverse reaction from the public and from others in Russia.

But, if the reasons for the letter were clear, the sources said the proposals themselves were puzzling.

Mr. Yeltsin said the international agreement that paved the way for German unification in 1990 legally ruled out further expansion of NATO, although that agreement contains no explicit reference to the issue.

"I know why he's saying all of this but I don't see the point of his proposals," said one alliance source.

"They'll upset the Eastern Europeans and I can't see Nato joining with Russia to give security guarantees."

Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev said in a magazine interview published Thursday that NATO should expand its links with his country's armed forces.

"That would be much more important for the security of Europe than a hasty expansion of NATO to include Poland or Hungary," he said.

"Russia must not be isolated. The goal must be to integrate Russia into the international community."

But Mr. Yeltsin's proposals are likely to have a major influence on the debate within NATO on how far to open up for new members. Diplomats said the alliance would have to proceed more cautiously now that some member nations such as Germany want.

Ironically, Mr. Yeltsin himself put the issue on the agenda when he said last month on a visit to Warsaw that it was entirely up to Poland to decide whether it wanted to join NATO.

The remarks sparked a debate in NATO about whether it should now accept Moscow's former satellites, because the alliance presumed that Russia no longer had a problem with it.

Since the end of the cold war, NATO has refused to consider extending its security guarantees to others and has instead set up a "cooperation council" which provides diplomatic links with its former Warsaw Pact enemies.

Now, NATO faces a major predicament.

It has always said it wanted to expand links with Russia and involve it fully in security issues but that Moscow should not have an effective veto on who joins.

Germany confirmed Friday President Yeltsin had written to NATO about its planned Eastward expansion, but said Bonn saw it as an offer of cooperation rather than a rebuff to efforts to extend the bloc.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl's spokesman played down statements by diplomats in other NATO capitals who said Mr. Yeltsin's letter to Western leaders was a warning.

"The letter is there, but I do not believe it is explosive," spokesman Norbert Schaefer told Reuters.

"It is not a rebuff, it is an offer of cooperation," he added of the letter delivered this week to the United States, Britain, France and Germany.

Mr. Kohl and Defence Minister Volker Ruhe have pressed for NATO to take in former Warsaw Pact enemies, a drive that gained momentum after Mr. Yeltsin in Warsaw last month said Poland was free to join the Western alliance, the agency said.

"The Hungarian Minister quoted Mr. Grachev as saying that in the long term, if NATO is expanded and Russia also joins it, his country would not oppose the admission of the East Central European states," it added.

Croats expel refugees from Mostar; kill 2 — U.N.

SARAJEVO (R) — Bosnian Croat forces shot dead two Muslim refugees in a group of nearly 400 they expelled under fire from the disputed Bosnian city of Mostar, a United Nations military spokesman said Friday.

According to reports from U.N. military observers, 374 old people, women and children were made to walk across the frontier to the Muslim enclave on east bank of the River Neretva.

"It is reported that HVO (Bosnia Croat) troops fired at them as they left the HVO lines and two were killed," spokesman Colonel Bill Aikman told reporters.

The HVO and the Muslims have been battling for control of Mostar since their alliance against the Serbs broke down earlier this year and turned into a scramble for territory ahead of a possible peace settlement.

The commander of the Bosnian army, Rasim Delic, Thursday declared a unilateral ceasefire in Mostar, which lies halfway between Sarajevo and the Adriatic coast, and in other areas of Bosnia where his forces are confronting the Croats.

Col. Aikman said the cease-

Mr. Schaefer said the letter was being reviewed by Bonn's Foreign and Defence Ministers as part of preparations for the January summit.

The leader of Poland's former Communists, who won most votes in last week's elections, accused Russia Friday of sending confusing signals over NATO membership for Eastern European nations.

Aleksander Kwasniewski, head of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), said President Yeltsin had apparently changed his mind after earlier deciding to present no obstacles to Poland's possible membership in the alliance.

"I am annoyed by this," Mr. Kwasniewski said in a radio interview. "There is nothing worse in politics than lack of consistency."

Russia's Defence Minister has told Hungary it would be unfortunate if former Warsaw Pact states joined NATO soon because this would isolate Moscow, Hungary's official MTI news agency reported Friday.

In a dispatch from Moscow, it quoted Hungarian Defence Minister Lajos Fur as saying Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev had told him this during talks Thursday.

"It would be unfortunate if the former Warsaw Pact states joined NATO in the near future because this step would relegate Russia to a much more isolated situation," Mr. Grachev told Mr. Fur in Moscow, the agency said.

"The Hungarian Minister quoted Mr. Grachev as saying that in the long term, if NATO is expanded and Russia also joins it, his country would not oppose the admission of the East Central European states," it added.

Death toll rises in Sri Lanka fighting

COLOMBO (R) — The death toll after four days of fierce fighting in a major government offensive into Sri Lanka's rebel-held northern Jaffna peninsula has risen to nearly 400, military sources said Friday. They said about 150 troops, 200 Tamil rebels and 40 civilians had been killed in the fighting. The air force continued to bomb rebel positions and helicopter gunships strafed targets under heavy resistance from the rebels. Troops began advancing again Friday morning soon after dawn but found the going difficult as they were attacked from all sides by rebels entrenched there. The sources said troops had been unable to advance very far Friday in the face of heavy mortar fire across open plains but the operation was continuing. A Defence Ministry statement said 200 rebels, including nine area leaders, and 114 soldiers had been killed in three days of heavy fighting and 248 soldiers wounded.

Killers spurn S. Africa's peace month

JOHANNESBURG (R) — South Africa's men of violence spurned the nation's first peace month, killing at least 470 people in September. "If the intention of peace month was to curb the killings, then it failed," Safoora Sadek, national director of the watchdog Human Rights Commission told Reuters Friday. In the final 24 hours of peace month, a black couple were shot dead and their seven-year-old son was wounded by a gunman who burst into their Brakpan home, east of Johannesburg. Two white Johannesburg men were shot dead by killers who made no attempt to steal their car or belongings. A black train commuter was killed in Soweto. Police have so far made no arrests. The only day the month's slaughter slowed was on Peace Day, on Sept. 2, when South Africans of all races held hands and prayed for an end to the killing. Meanwhile Siskei prosecutor Willem Jurgens said Thursday the military ruler of the homeland, Brigadier Oupa Gqozo, will face charges of murder relating to the killing of rebel Charles Sebe. "I received the news papers this morning, I have read them.... I have decided it doesn't change by opinion and I will be proceeding to prosecute Brigadier Gqozo on a charge of murder...." Mr. Jurgens told Reuters by telephone from the homeland's capital Bisho. Mr. Jurgens is an independent-minded official whose position predates the March 1990 coup in which Gen. Gqozo seized power.

Brushfire rages on in California

SANTA YNEZ, California (R) — Weary fire crews chased a raging wildfire away from ranches owned by Michael Jackson and other celebrities Thursday but the blaze grew to 32,000 acres as it roared into a remote mountain wilderness. Firefighters were beginning to get the upper hand on the fire, which was 35 per cent contained, but there was no word on when they might bring it fully under control. "We're making progress," said spokesman for the U.S. Forestry Service. More than 3,200 firefighters were battling the brushfire in the Los Padres National Forest, an area about 100 miles northwest of Los Angeles where a number of Hollywood stars keep homes and ranches. Firefighters were successful overnight in erecting firebreaks to steer the flames away from Santa Ynez, the site of Jackson's Neverland Ranch and other celebrity estates. "The closest one would be Michael Jackson's place and the fire was about three miles away," said forestry spokesman Manuel Madrigal. "We understand they did evacuate some of his animals, horses and whatever he had there." Actress Bo Derek helped Hollywood columnist Roma Barrett secure her horses as the smoke and flames became visible at their properties.

BRIGHTON, England (R) — Britain's opposition Labour Party, fresh from a narrow victory, is concerned the party's influence of trade unions has sought to put internal battles behind it and focus on winning the next election.

Home affairs spokesman Tony Blair, echoing a widespread feeling of relief among the party hierarchy, said: "I think the wounds will heal pretty quickly. I think this allows the Labour Party to unite behind a strong and determined leader."

The party's annual conference in this southern coastal resort voted by 47.5 per cent to 44.4 Wednesday to end the union block vote in the selection of parliamentary candidates and replace it with one member, one vote.

With undisguised glee, party leader John Smith said afterwards: "I believe the tide of opinion is running in our favour."

Mr. Smith had staked his authority on the reform, arguing that the image of a party dominated by unions for a century had contributed to Labour's defeat in the past four elections.

"Now we can put constitutional matters aside and get on with the major issues of getting full employment, improving social services, fighting against VAT (value added tax) increases and preparing for victory in the next election," said Labour trade and industry spokesman Robin

is not due for more than three years, many political analysts believe Labour has been too absorbed with internal differences to capitalise on the problems of a Conservative government torn by disunity and lurking from crisis to crisis.

Prime Minister John Major, who could face a rough ride from dissidents at his own party conference next week, was predictably quick to pour scorn on Mr. Smith's victory.

Mr. Major said: "It's policy that people care about and as far as policy is concerned the unions are still calling the tune and John Smith is receiving the message on his knees."

The knife-edge vote was a symbolic triumph for Smith over the unions who will still wield power at policy-making conferences and on the ruling National Executive Committee.

The outcome was in doubt until the last moment when one big union decided to abstain and party transport spokesman John Prescott — a man respected in the trade union movement — electrified the conference with a rumbustious speech of support for Mr. Smith's proposals.

Senior party officials were delighted with the result, arguing that a defeat would have wounded Mr. Smith and left him as a lame duck leader. "This will put the issue behind us," said Labour trade and industry spokesman Robin

Abkhazians fight pockets of Georgian resistance

MOSCOW (AFP) — Separatist rebels battled government forces in the mountains of eastern Abkhazia Friday, clearing up the last pockets of Georgian resistance in the breakaway region, ITAR-TASS reported.

The Abkhazian forces, who gained control Thursday of the last two Georgian-held towns in the region, Ochamchire and Gali, advanced Friday towards the Inguri River, which forms the border between Abkhazia and western Georgia, military leaders of the separatist forces told the Russian news agency.

The Georgian News Agency reported that government units were surrounded in the mountains near the regional capital Sukhumi, which fell to separatists Monday, and outside Ochamchire and that close-quarters fighting Friday was intense.

Iprinda quoted hospital sources as saying 744 wounded Georgian soldiers had been admitted for treatment in recent days and more were expected.

This week's string of battlefield victories have left the separatists in control of more than 80 per cent of Abkhazia, which before the war had a population of 80,000 ethnic Abkhazians and 250,000 Georgians.

Dzhabe Iosseliani, a close aide to Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze, said Georgia had to consider the



Two Georgian soldiers carry their guns as they participate in a rally in which hundreds of people demanded the resignation of Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze and his replacement by former Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia (AFP photo)

Meanwhile, a helicopter flying to pick up refugees in Georgia's separatist region of Abkhazia crashed in bad weather killing about six people on board, the Interior Ministry said.

A ministry statement said the civil aircraft had been on its way to evacuate some of the tens of thousands of refugees displaced by the fighting in the region.

The statement said the helicopter bad been flying to the mountain town of Sakeni when it came down Thursday evening.

It did not specify the type of aircraft involved in the mishap, but said about six people were on board, including the helicopter's crew.

Kim: Pyongyang remains a threat

SEOUL (Agencies) — South Korean President Kim Young-Sam said Friday that Seoul must keep its guard up because North Korea — especially in nuclear weapons — continues to build its military strength.

"In spite of severe food shortages, North Korea is further building up its military muscle and has recently added again to the concentration of troops and arms along their side of the demilitarized zone," Mr. Kim said in his address on the 45th Armed Forces Day.

"North Korea has a strong obsession with developing nuclear weapons. We ask the

North this question: At whom are the nuclear bombs and missiles aimed," he said.

"We ourselves must protect our own national security. We need strength to maintain peace and preserve our national integrity."

Tension continues to exist between the two Koreas because South Korea and Western allies suspect the North of conducting a secret nuclear arms programme at a complex at Yongbyon, 100 kilometres north of the capital Pyongyang. The site is believed to be a nuclear waste store for weapons-grade plutonium.

The two Koreas remain technically at war since the 1950-53 Korean war.

South Korea opposes immediate international sanctions against North Korea over its nuclear weapons programme despite mounting calls to do so, Seoul's foreign minister was quoted as saying Friday.

Despite the fact that the rest of the world is headed toward reconciliation and peace, the Korean peninsula still remains the only remnant of the cold war," Mr. Kim told the nation in a television speech.

The two Koreas remain technically at war since the 1950-53 Korean war.

South Korea opposes immediate international sanctions against North Korea over its nuclear weapons programme despite mounting calls to do so, Seoul's foreign minister was quoted as saying Friday.

Japan and Russia would also issue a joint statement calling on North Korea to end its reported military nuclear programme, it said.

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chain which were seized by Stalin in the last days of World War II, analysts said.

Foreign Minister Hata, quoted by the Japanese news agency Kyodo, stressed that Japan had made its "assertion" over the disputed islands: Kunashir, Iturup, Shikotan and Habomai group.

But Russia faces difficult realities and its domestic situation may not allow progress" on the issue, he said.

Even so, more than a dozen accords would be signed during Mr. Yeltsin's visit, including an agreement confirming Japan's help to dismantle the former Soviet nuclear arsenal, Jiji Press said.

If the upcoming visit does go ahead, it will be a delicate exercise for Mr. Yeltsin, given the continuing dispute with Japan over islands in the Kuril

polls.

Centrist Liberal Democrats have proved their growing influence by winning two parliamentary by-elections this year, and they talk of crushing the Conservatives in the pivotal south of England at the next election, due by mid-1997.

But if Mr. Major fails to rouse the 5,000 delegates, his days could well be numbered and the turmoil in his party, which has seen its popularity into a tailspin, would be set to continue.

"The mood is obviously one of concern but the overwhelming majority of the party is extremely keen for the conference to succeed," said one party official. "I believe if we collectively do our bit it will all go down very well."

Conservative conferences are usually no more than a rally where ministers are cheered and debates sporadically interrupt drinks parties and meetings with old friends.

But this year the largely middle class delegates meet in an atmosphere of gloom and anger at the government's perceived incompetence, caused by 18 months of disaster since the party won its fourth successive election in April 1992.

The Conservatives are still trying to patch up divisions over Mr. Major's desire for closer ties with Europe, which caused probably the biggest split in the party for more than 20 years.

Labour leads the government by 15 points in opinion

China opens Confucius amusement park

PEKING (R) — China has opened an amusement park based on the precepts of the ancient philosopher Confucius, whose strict teachings concentrated on theories of personal responsibility and official benevolence. The Liuyi Park in Confucius' home city of Qufu in northern Shandong province, boasts six sections: "Traditional rites, music, shooting, driving, reading and calculation," the official Xinhua News Agency said. "Visitors can drive cattle carts to recreate the experiences of Confucius in his travels. In the shooting section, visitors can ride on horseback in primitive forests to hunt. In the music section, visitors can enjoy ancient Chinese music," the agency said.

The new sightseeing spots and ancient-style dances add greatly to the appeal of the ongoing "93 International Confucius Cultural Festival," Xinhua said.

Sports

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Becker sees new life after baby

SYDNEY (AFP) — Triple Wimbledon champion Boris Becker is expecting major changes in his life, including less tennis, with the birth of his first child due in January. The German star is here to prepare for next week's Australian Indoor Championships and spoke of the decisions that confront him in the coming months. "I haven't made up my mind about (playing) the Davis Cup (in the future), but I won't be down for the Australian Open as my fiancee, Barbara, will be expecting our first child then," Becker said Friday. "I don't know how I will handle the situation. It's obviously going to change my life very much." It probably will affect the number of tournaments I will play in, but it's the biggest thrill of my life so far," Becker confirmed earlier this week that he would stand by his controversial decision not to play this year's Davis Cup competition despite Germany reaching the final against Australia with a 5-0 drubbing of Sweden.

Fendick, Martinez struggle through

LEIPZIG, Germany (AP) — Patty Fendick of the United States and Spain's Conchita Martinez struggled on Thursday, advancing to the quarterfinals at the Volkswagen Card Cup. Germany's Barbara Ritter, who ousted Stephane Kettler of the Netherlands 6-2, 6-3, was the only unseeded player to survive among the final eight players. She will face Austria's Judith Wiesner, a 2-6, 7-5, 6-4 winner over Andrea Stradová of the Czech Republic. But Martinez, ranked fifth in the world, needed one hour, 45 minutes to outbattle Germany's Marketa Kochta, 3-6, 6-4, 6-2. Kochta is ranked 113.

'Fortuna' withdraws from Whitbread race

LONDON (R) — A broken mizzen mast has forced the withdrawal of the Spanish yacht 'Fortuna' from the annual Whitbread Round the World Race, the organisers said Thursday. 'Fortuna', skippered by Englishman Lawrie Smith, is heading for the southern English port city of Southampton, where 14 yachts set out from last Saturday on the 32,000-mile race expected to take about nine months. The damaged yacht, which is due to arrive in Southampton early next week, lost its mizzen mast just 24 hours into the race but decided late Wednesday to turn back, the Whitbread organisers said in a statement. Leading the field on the 6,000-mile first leg of the race across the Atlantic to Punta Del Este, Uruguay, is the yacht 'Tokio,' a joint Japanese-New Zealand entry. The organisers said that with just over 4,800 miles to go, the New Zealand yacht 'Endeavour' was in second place, 'Winston' of the United States was third with 'Yamaha' of New Zealand fourth and the Spanish yacht 'Galicia 93 Pescanova' fifth.

McCoist boost for Rangers

GLASGOW (AFP) — Ally McCoist, Scottish football's leading scorer last season, is ready to return for Rangers at Raith Saturday and so provide a welcome boost for the beleaguered champions. Knocked out of the European Cup in midweek, they have taken just nine points from their first eight games without the considerable services of McCoist, who has been sidelined for five months with a broken leg. The 31-year-old Scottish international has made just one reserve outing since his injury, but is considered fit enough to face Raith. He is set to team up again with Mark Hateley, but three other Scottish internationals — left-back David Robertson, midfielder Stuart McCall and centre-back Dave McPherson — are unlikely starters through injury.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAHMIM HIRSH
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WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q.1—Both vulnerable, as South What action do you take? You hold:
♦A8 ♦K9 542 06 ♦8752 Q.4—Neither vulnerable, as South The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West you hold:
1 ♠ Pass 1 ♠ Pass ♦AQJ104 ♦7632 0364 45
3 ♠ Pass ?
What action do you take?
Q.2—As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♦A9 7A8 ♦KQ92 ♦Q1062 Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?
Q.3—As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♦K9 ♦A10 OKQ87 ♦AKJ3 The bidding has proceeded:
South West North East 2 NT Pass 4 NT Pass Partner opens the bidding with one club. What do you respond?



Martina Navratilova will have her eyes set on a record 10th Wimbledon title

Navratilova to quit in a year

NEW YORK (AP) — American tennis star Martina Navratilova announced she will play singles for just one more year.

Navratilova went public with her decision while promoting the Virginia Slims Championships, in which she competes between November 15 and 21 at Madison Square Garden.

The 36-year-old winner of 18 Grand Slam singles titles and arguably the greatest female player ever said she had no intention of playing singles part-time. But she intends to continue her doubles career.

Her retirement will be the end of an incredible era since her first major win at Wimbledon in 1978.

The world's third ranked player has won 165 singles titles, but only four this year. She has not won a Grand Slam title in three years, when she picked up her ninth Wimbledon crown against surprise finalist Zina Garrison.

"Chances are next year will be my last year playing full-time," she said after losing the Virginia Slims Championships final to Monica Seles last November. Now, she

apparently has pushed back her timetable another year.

It could be said the Czech-born player pushed the women's game to higher levels during the last 15 years with her strict diet and rigorous training schedules.

Her professionalism and dedication, plus a natural attacking serve-volley style, have brought her a haul of titles which few will ever equal.

Navratilova has won Wimbledon nine times, the U.S. Open four times, the Australian Open three times and the French Open twice.

Top fillies well drawn in Arc field

PARIS (R) — Top fillies had the luck of the draw Friday when final runners and riders were announced for Sunday's Prix De L'arc De Triomphe.

Low numbers are generally considered best, especially in heavy ground, for the 12-furlong (2.4-km) test and pre-race favourite Wemyss Bright was drawn four of the 23 runners.

Wemyss Bright, one of four runners for top French trainer Andre Fabre, will have the assistance of Pat Eddery.

Successful in the Irish Oaks, Wemyss Bright has been quoted 4-1 favourite with French Derby winner Hernando, the mount of Cash Asnussen, but less well drawn at 13.

French Oaks winner Shemaka, owned by the Aga Khan, was drawn three with last year's Arc runner-up User Friendly, another filly, on the rails in stall one.

Armiger, second in the English St Leger to Bob's Return, was drawn two with French longshot Dancienne at five and Bright Moon, another runner for Fabre, at six.

Short cheered by successful defence

LONDON (R) — Briton Nigel Short accomplished his goal of consolidating his defences, gaining a valuable draw with the black pieces in game 11 of his world title chess challenge against Garry Kasparov Thursday.

Short, 28, was in buoyant mood at a post-game news conference, answering questions openly and with good humour.

Kasparov, 30, was subdued after his first poor performance with the usually deadly advantage of the first move, and said that he had overestimated his chances, spoiling a good position by insufficiently subtle play.

For the first time in the 24-game series Short bad pressed for a win when playing black, gradually outplaying the champion from an apparently passive position.

Short, who forced Kasparov into time pressure, admitted that he had tried to speed up his play. "It is not so easy with such complicated games. You have to find a good rhythm, but yes, it was a conscious decision (to speed up)," Short said.

Asked to comment on the

fact that their official numerical rankings predicted an 8-3 advantage to Kasparov — the current score in the match — Short poked fun at world chess body FIDE.

"I believe the expected score is 5½ to 5½ since we have the same rating — zero," Short joked, a reference to the fact that FIDE stripped both players of their rankings as part of the dispute that led the players to form the breakaway Professional Chess Association (PCA).

Short insisted he was not feeling the ill effects of the grueling marathon match, which has been unusually hard-fought.

"I feel fine. It is a tough match, a long match and of course quite exhausting, but I am absolutely OK," Short said.

"What we will see more and more as Sydney 2000 approaches is year-round continuous testing programmes on a world wide basis. So not only are we saying that athletes will be clean at the time of the Games, but that they were clean in their preparation, that is going to be the major difference," Haynes said.

He said eliminating drug use in sport still had a long way to go in some countries such as

Lewis-Bruno: The bout Britain has dreamed of for a century

CARDIFF, Wales (AP) — It sounds like pure fiction Two British boxers fighting for the World Heavyweight Title at a rugby stadium in Wales.

It doesn't matter that one of them, Lennox Lewis was raised in Canada and fought as a Canadian when he won an Olympic gold medal.

He called himself a Brit when the World Boxing Council banded him their title. And he was British when he defended it against Tony Tucker in May.

Early Saturday, he comes up against another London-born fighter, Frank Bruno, for a fight Britain has dreamed of for a century.

Some 30,000 British fans will be at Cardiff Arms Park for a 1 am showdown, scheduled so late so that HBO can televise it at a popular hour on the east coast of the United States.

In Britain, the fight is technically on Saturday, states-side

it's Friday night.

It's third time lucky for Bruno, a 31-year-old comparative veteran who will be in his 40th pro fight. Two of his three defeats were in world title fights against Tim Witherspoon, an 11th round knockout in 1986, and against Mike Tyson, a fifth round knockout in 1989.

He has a big right hand capable of knocking out anyone in the world. But his lack of mobility and suspect chin make him an ideal target for the unbeaten Lewis.

Bruno has recently been receiving fitness training from Keith Morton and calls him his conditioning "guru." It will not be lost on Lewis that Morton is a national karate champion.

"Everything's going beautiful, fitting like a Jigsaw puzzle," Bruno said. According to Morton, the training, which does include karate, improves Bruno's speed and co-ordination. One of his heavy

points.

"It makes him stronger in his mind and far more aggressive," Morton said. "But I've reduced the karate in the last few weeks just to avoid confusion and keep his mind on the jolt."

Thursday's weigh-in revealed Bruno had nine extra pounds. The challenger scaled 238 pounds (108 kilos) compared with the champion's 229 (103.7 kilos).

The question is, whether it is nine pounds of extra power or nine pounds more to haul around the ring.

The fight is likely to have little interest outside Britain. Which has gained notoriety over the decades for producing losing — some say horizontal — heavyweights.

The prize money is \$8 million, with Bruno receiving \$1.5 million for what would almost certainly be his last fight should he lose.

Australia aims for drug free Olympics

SYDNEY (R) — Australia plans to usher in a new era of drug-free sport when Sydney hosts the 2000 Olympics.

But there are still many hurdles to clear, according to Steve Haynes, chief executive of the Australian Sports Drug Agency (ASDA), which is seen as a world leader in combatting drug use in sports.

ASDA's policy of testing athletes for drugs all year round should be adopted worldwide by 2000, Haynes told Reuters in an interview Thursday.

He said the recent decision by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and sports federations to standardise dope testing will lead to the adoption of the Australian model of testing athletes during training or in competition at any time of the year.

"We (ASDA) believe the Sydney Games will be different because up until now drug testing has only been taken place at the time of the games," he said.

"What we will see more and more as Sydney 2000 approaches is year-round continuous testing programmes on a world wide basis. So not only are we saying that athletes will be clean at the time of the Games, but that they were clean in their preparation, that is going to be the major difference," Haynes said.

He said eliminating drug use in sport still had a long way to go in some countries such as

the United States. There, track and field administrators drug test athletes, a system that is open to compromise.

While accepting the system was not necessarily corrupt, he cited eminent U.S. sports doctor Robert Voyn, who said: "Having sport run the testing programme is like having a fox guard the hen house."

Haynes, a biochemist and former English county cricketer, said the IOC had been criticised in the past for testing athletes only during the two-week Olympic competition and not before or after the games.

Top Olympic official Prince Alexandre de Merode said in January about 10 per cent of athletes frequently used drugs and out-of-competition controls were insufficient.

Haynes said it was hard to assess the level of drug use in sport, but added only five athletes tested positive at the 1992 Barcelona Games, down from the 10 who tested positive at the Seoul Olympics in 1988.

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PRO

Palestinians seek to disengage from Israeli economy and link with Arabs'

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Simultaneous with building infrastructure in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Palestinians will seek to disengage themselves from the economy of the occupying power and reengage with the economies of Jordan and other Arab countries, a senior Palestinian economic planner says.

Samir Abdullah, one of the Palestinian peace negotiators with Israel and a member of the team to multilateral talks on regional economic cooperation, admits that it is going to be a tough process, given the tough binds that Israel has imposed on the Palestinian economy since seizing the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the 1967 war.

However, Dr. Abdullah, an associated professor of economics at Al Najah University in the West Bank, believes that disengagement from Israel could be achieved if the Palestinians play their cards right.

For one thing, Dr. Abdullah told the Jordan Times last week, the Palestinians will insist on their right to independent decisions in the utilisation of international assistance expected to be pumped into the occupied territories to support the Palestinian autonomy envisaged under the agreement signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) on Sept. 13.

"It does not mean that we will be denying opportunities to the donor countries or the World Bank," said Dr. Abdullah shortly before his departure for Washington to attend a donors' conference held Friday. "We welcome their supervisory role and believe that we could greatly benefit from their expertise and technology."

But, he added, "we want to

have our right to independent choice free from pressure from any quarters."

The issue of who will control and channel the aid was expected to spark a heated debate.

Washington is known to favour strong World Bank monitoring of the appropriation of the funds under the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) — a situation that will suit Israel since it will be able to exercise influence and secure a large portion of the economic action.

The European Community (EC) has said that, in view of community member states' close involvement in the Middle East and its record of financial assistance to the countries of the region, it should assume a leading role in rebuilding the West Bank and Gaza (Britain, despite being an EC member, is believed to support the American position, while France is a strong advocate of an EC dominance in this context).

In their pursuit of economic disengagement from Israel, the Palestinians will also shun joint projects with the Jewish state not only in the interim period to avoid charges that the Jewish state is seeking to maintain economic control of the occupied territories.

He confirmed that the Palestinian leadership was calling on businessmen and industrial entrepreneurs in the occupied territories to stay away from involving Israeli firms in joint ventures.

"In any case, joint ventures with Israelis are impossible before the conclusion of a comprehensive peace agreement," Dr. Abdullah said, adding that the Palestinians were aware of a growing interest in Israeli business circles to engage in the rebuilding of the occupied territories.

Dr. Abdullah did not directly comment on the surprising Israeli stand, but indicated that the Palestinians have to remain alert and keep close focus on their priorities and prefer-

ences.

The economist said, however, that he believed that Israeli firms, whose cost of production is definitely higher than their counterparts in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, will not be able to offer competitive prices.

In the medium and long term, "our decisions will be based on our strategic economic interests and definite trade and cooperation agreements, and this will apply not only to Israel but all other countries in the region," he said.

Dr. Abdullah's colleague in the economic planning and negotiating team, Dr. Samir Huleihah, said last week that the Palestinians "would not accept becoming a Trojan horse for Israeli economic supremacy in the Arab World in the post-peace era."

He also categorically ruled out Israeli companies playing a role in the "public sector infrastructure investment programme" during the interim period.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has told his cabinet that the Palestinians should be allowed to take the initiative in joint economic projects during the interim period to avoid charges that the Jewish state is seeking to maintain economic control of the occupied territories.

"It was agreed... (during a cabinet meeting on Sept. 26)... that it is desirable that proposals come from (the Palestinians) rather than us, due to their suspicions that we seek to dominate them," Israeli Economics Minister Shimon Shetreet told Israel Television. If adhered to, the Israeli stand could go a long way in reassuring the Palestinians.

Dr. Abdullah did not directly comment on the surprising Israeli stand, but indicated that the Palestinians have to remain alert and keep close focus on their priorities and prefer-

ences.

The professor estimated the per capita income of the Palestinians in the occupied territories at \$1,200 compared with \$10,000 of the Israelis.

Such a disparity is cited by regional and international economic experts as one of the key dissuading factors that would influence any move towards post-peace Palestinian-Israeli economic integration beyond the Israeli concept of the occupied territories as a major market for Israeli products and a conduit to the Arab markets.

"Our priority is to reduce our dependence on the Israeli economy and to reengage ourselves with the Arab World," said Dr. Abdullah, noting that economic logic, if nothing else, prompts the Palestinians to turn to the Arabs rather than the Israelis. "It is going to be tough," he said. "But we do not find any reason why Israel should not agree to our position."

In any case, if the idea of the peace process to let the Palestinians assume control of their lives and affairs, then it is only natural that Israel should let go of its stranglehold on the Palestinian economy, he said, implying that international pressure was one of the weapons that the Palestinians would use to achieve their objective.

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Women grieve Friday over the bodies of relatives who were killed in Kilar village, Latur district, when a massive earthquake hit Maharashtra state in pre-dawn hours Thursday (AFP photo)

COLUMN 8

Bank robber surrenders in U.S. hostage incident

NEW YORK (AP) — One member of a robbery team that held three people hostage in a Brooklyn Bank surrendered afternoon after a nine-hour standoff with police. At least one other robber remained in the bank with two of the three hostages, but police were optimistic that the episode was nearing a peaceful end, said officer Scott Bloch, a police spokesman. Police originally reported that as many as four robbers stormed the bank at 8:30 a.m. (1230 GMT) and took three bank employees hostage before a small army of police arrived on the scene. After the surrender, the number of robbers was in doubt. After hours of telephone negotiations, a suspect, identified only as a black male in his late 30s, emerged from the bank unarmored at 5:15 p.m. (2115 GMT) and immediately was arrested, Mr. Bloch said. One of the hostages apparently was released about the same time, he said. The standoff began after gunmen accosted a security guard at the Chase Manhattan branch, taking him into an area of the bank that triggered an alarm, police said. They then took two female employees hostage. The area soon was swarming with police, including sharpshooters perched on rooftops. Officers also cordoned off dozen blocks around the bank, and ordered businesses in the normally bustling commercial district to close.

Rutskoi is still vice president in mom's eyes

Alleged intelligence agents Abdal Basset Ali Megrah and Lameen Khalifa Fhimah are charged in Britain and the United States with carrying out the bombing. U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher said Thursday that whatever the Libyans tell the secretary-general, "we ought to go ahead and table the resolution to sort of keep the pressure on."

He expressed scepticism that the Libyans would cooperate, telling reporters in New York, "we've been disappointed in this arena before, and we would want to look at the fine print."

Iran said Western pressure on Libya would not end even if it handed the suspects over. State-run Tehran Radio said Libya imposed an air and arms embargo and diplomatic sanctions on Libya in 1992 to pressure it to turn over the suspects.

No outright ban on oil imports.

Pakistani soldier dies in Somalia

Combined agency dispatches

MOGADISHU — A Pakistani U.N. soldier has died of wounds he sustained in an attack by Somali militiamen, bringing the death toll among U.N. troops in Mogadishu to 270 people.

Libya took a step closer to compliance Wednesday when it said it would allow the two to stand trial in Scotland.

The same day, Libyan Foreign Minister Omar Al Muntasir said after meeting with U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali that it would be

impossible to hand the two over by Friday, but that he hoped a timetable for the handover would be finalised Thursday.

But a scheduled further meeting between the two men on Thursday failed to materialise, apparently because the Libyans here were waiting for instructions from Tripoli that never came, a U.N. spokesman said.

It was not clear if a meeting would take place Friday.

The three countries were not pushing for immediate discussion or adoption of the resolution for new sanctions in the hope of receiving some further response from Libya, diplomats said.

"We have tabled the resolution today. That is pressure," British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd told journalists.

Britain, France and the United States had set Friday as the deadline for a handover of two Libyans suspected of bombing a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, in December 1988, killing 270 people.

Mr. Merimee explained the delay by citing "good will" and "encouraging words" from Libya.

The Security Council imposed an air and arms embargo and diplomatic sanctions on Libya in 1992 to pressure it to turn over the suspects.

No outright ban on oil imports.

retired Admiral Jonathon Howe, was Friday in the process of moving from a prefabricated residence at the U.N. headquarters in the former U.S. embassy to a more solid new home.

A Norwegian soldier was slightly injured when a rocket struck close to Adm. Howe's former quarters early this week.

Overnight Thursday, four rockets were fired at Mogadishu airport close to the city centre, but no injuries were reported.

In other developments:

— The head of the European charity Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF — Doctors Without Borders) has accused the United Nations and the United States of committing a "humanitarian crime" in Somalia.

MSF President Rony Brauman charged that the international body and the U.S. armed forces had turned Somalia into a testbed for the "creation of a permanent military intervention force."

— U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali has warned in a letter to the United States that its withdrawal from Somalia would undermine the U.N. mission and rekindle the civil war with all its horrors.

In a recent letter to U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, the U.N. chief said there was "no practical alternative" to the current U.N. mission in Somalia, adding that without U.S. support "our efforts will not succeed."

A U.S. withdrawal would "oblige the U.N. Security Council either to withdraw UNOSOM or surrender control of south Mogadishu to Aided," Dr. Ghali said.

Such a situation "would condemn the people of Somalia to the resumption of civil war and all the horrors that would result," the U.N. chief said in his letter.

Nice guy finishes first at Country Music Awards

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — An ex-pop singer and avid golfer who specialises in delicate love ballads sang in an angelic tenor on top of the country music world. Vince Gill was named the Country Music Association's Entertainer of the Year. He's a change of page from the bombastic (Garth Brooks, Hank Williams Jr.) and traditionalist (George Strait) winners of the past six years. He joins such past winners as Johnny Cash, Glen Campbell and John Denver who also started out in pop music. Gill is the former lead singer of Pure Prairie League. He once turned down an offer to tour with Dire Straits to concentrate on his country music career. Gill, 36, said he was stunned by the Entertainer Award, because he hasn't joined the current trend, led by Brooks, toward elaborate effects-laden stage productions.

"I don't have the big stage show. I don't run around and do a lot of those things. I've got a killer band and it's just great singing and playing. Gill said backstage at the show broadcast live on CBS-TV from the Grand Ole Opry House.

before their release have alerted them to watch their backs.

Although a general strike was observed in the West Bank in protest against the arrest of the Panthers and leading Jerusalemites called the Israeli action a "violation" of the PLO-Israel accord, the Israeli chief of staff, General Ehud Barak, said his forces would continue operations against wanted Palestinians until a political decision was taken by the government to cease these operations. Presumably, Mossad could also continue to target men like Mr. Davison, now free somewhere in England.

It is ironic that Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres characterised the release of these men as "very regrettable" at precisely the same time as officers of his internal security force, Shin Bet, were holding discussions with representatives of Force 17 on how to guarantee peace and security in the occupied territories once Israel withdraws.

JPJ, in 100

Israel, PLO clash over hunt for Palestinian activists

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Israel's military chief pledged Friday to bunt down Palestinian guerrillas in the occupied territories even though arrests of wanted activists has already provoked the first clash between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) over their autonomy agreement.

"We will continue to pursue the Palestinians who are directly implicated in serious attacks against Israelis and Palestinians," Israel's military chief of staff, General Ehud Barak, told Israel Radio Friday.

"These wanted people must be put behind bars until the situation becomes clear," Gen. Barak had told journalists in Tel Aviv on Thursday.

"It is better for the Palestinians and it is better for us," he said following Wednesday's arrest of six fighters from the Black Panthers, the armed wing of Fatah, the main PLO group.

One of those caught was Black Panther leader Ahmad Awad Kamil, sought for the past three years for a series of killings of Israelis and Palestinians.

His arrest provoked a wave of anger among Palestinian leaders and a shut-down strike on the West Bank on Thursday.

Fatah movement called a commercial strike in the West

Bank on Thursday to protest against the arrests.

Ahmad Irshad, a Fatah leader in the West Bank, told Reuters: "People were arrested by the Israeli army behaviour, especially since Fatah had already announced a ceasefire."

The Black Panthers declared a ceasefire with the army after PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat renounced violence and urged his supporters to stop attacks on Israelis as part of the peace deal.

Gen. Barak said the arrested members of the Black Panthers were responsible for killing not only Israelis but many Palestinians suspected as informers for Israel.

He said their capture was "good for Palestinian society and good for our (Israeli) society."

Palestinian leaders Sari Nusseibeh and Ziyad Abu Zayad said the arrest of the Black Panthers was a "provocation" and harmed peace efforts between the PLO and Israel.

Bassam Abu Sharif, political adviser to Mr. Arafat, told Friday's Al Quds newspaper in East Jerusalem that the hunt was a flagrant violation of the agreement by the Israeli army.

According to Israeli Radio, 19 armed Palestinian militants in the Jenin area, where the Black Panthers were caught, are on the wanted list.

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Fatah movement called a commercial strike in the West

Jews questioned

Israeli police have questioned three Jews on suspicion of inciting civil rebellion against the Palestinian autonomy agreement, a spokesman said.

Police ministry spokesman Rafi Levy confirmed the investigation of Yehuda Etzion, Rabbi Oded Kitov and Rabbi Mordechai Karpel on suspicion of rebellion.

Mr. Etzion, jailed in the past for membership of a Jewish underground group that killed and maimed Arabs, said in a radio interview Wednesday he stood behind the call to rebel.